

ARTHUR BALDWINSON
REGIONAL MODERNISM IN SYDNEY
1937-1969

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REGIONAL MODERNISM IN SYDNEY 1937-1969

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DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the candidate alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research programme; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged. Ethics procedures, where applicable, have been followed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael Bogle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'M' and 'B'.

Michael Bogle

11 September 2009

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Chris Wood of Melbourne has generously shared images from his collection of Arthur Baldwinson drawings, prints and sketches from Baldwinson's student days at the Gordon Institute of Technology, Geelong. The senior architect Greg Holman, whose undergraduate thesis on Arthur Baldwinson first asserted Baldwinson's importance in 20th century Australian architecture, has allowed me to transcribe, append and amend his 1980 listing of Baldwinson's architectural works. His important contributions to this work are also acknowledged throughout the references. The role of other scholars in the shaping of this work is gratefully acknowledged through internal referencing.

Thanks are due to the numerous interviewees who have provided opportunities for questions and queries. They have been generous with their time and their recollections have been critical in understanding Baldwinson's personal approach to architecture as well as teaching.

The role of the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, the custodians of the Baldwinson papers, is central to the development of the thesis. Marie Alcorn provided access to uncatalogued Baldwinson material and allowed me to inventory the new material while Jennifer Broomhead, the Copyright and Permissions Librarian gave me permission to reproduce the associated visual material. Librarians from the State Library of Victoria, the NSW Royal Australian Institute of Architects, the Gordon Institute of Technology, the National Library of Australia, Canberra, the Historic Houses Trust of NSW, the State Library of Queensland, the National Archives of Australia and other researchers too numerous to mention have been unfailingly helpful in the course of this research.

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SUMMARY

This study examines the career of Arthur Baldwinson (1908-1969), a Sydney-based modernist architect. The thesis argues that Baldwinson was a central figure in the development of a modernist domestic architecture in Australia from the late 1930s until the late 1950s through his practice as well as his activist role in the development of the Australian design reform and arts organisations: the Modern Architecture Research Group (MARS); the Designers for Industry Association of Australia (DIAA); and the Contemporary Art Society (CAS).

It is further argued that Baldwinson designed and built two of Sydney's first authentically modernist houses before the 1939-45 War and that his subsequent development and refinement of a regional methodology for modernism in Sydney's domestic architecture is at the centre of the later regionalist styles of the late 1950s and early 1960s associated with the "Sydney School".

Baldwinson was born in Kalgoorlie, West Australia in 1908. He trained in architecture (1925-1929) under George R. King, the head of the architecture programme at the Gordon Institute of Technology, Geelong, Victoria. Baldwinson's work, especially in the areas of drawing and rendering, was exemplary and this led King to ask him to stay on as "Architectural Instructor". Baldwinson held a teaching position from 1930 until 1932 when he left for London.

In London, Baldwinson was first employed in the office of Raymond McGrath, an architecture graduate from the University of Sydney. In this office, Baldwinson worked alongside such major talents like Serge Chermayeff and Wells Coates. In mid-1934, Baldwinson worked for the firm Adams Thompson and Fry during the period when principal partner and co-founder of MARS (Modern Architectural Research group), Maxwell Fry, in collaboration with social reformer Elizabeth Denby, was designing Kensal House, the progressive, modernist housing scheme for the Gas Light and Coke Company.

In October 1934, Fry formed a partnership with Walter Gropius with whom Baldwinson worked directly until early 1937. Gropius departed for the United States in March 1937. Baldwinson was actively involved in the design and drawings of Gropius's commissions including: Isokon 3 medium density project, Windsor; the E. W. Levy House, Chelsea; the Donaldson House, Sevenoaks; the Impington Village College, Cambridgeshire and the Christ's College project for Cambridge University.

In January 1937, Baldwinson returned to Australia to take up a position with Stephenson & Meldrum, first in their Melbourne office, then later in Sydney as Stephenson & Turner. In early 1938 Baldwinson entered the annual Victorian Timber Development Association (TDA) prize for residential timber buildings and won in three categories. Soon after this success, he established his own practice in Pitt Street, Sydney. In 1938-1939, he formed a brief design partnership with fellow-West Australian, John Oldham (Oldham & Baldwinson) to design a workers' housing project near Coomaditchy Lagoon, Port Kembla, New South Wales.

In 1938, Baldwinson had his first solo commission, Collins House at Palm Beach. Baldwinson designed a red-stained weatherboard house on a sandstone plinth comprising an external stair

ramp, two bedrooms, cantilevered verandah and “playroom” on the lower level. The house received considerable attention.

Before the 1939-45 War disrupted his career, Baldwinson was on the organising committee for the formation of the Australian Modern Architecture Research Society (MARS) and Australia’s first industrial design organization, the “Design and Industries Association of Australia” (DIAA).

During the 1939-45 War, Baldwinson worked for the Commonwealth Aircraft Factory designing and constructing buildings engaged in aircraft manufacture. By 1943, he had been promoted Chief Architect of the Beaufort Division, Department of Aircraft Production (DAP). Baldwinson later developed an all-steel pre-fabricated “Beaufort” house for DAP post-war sale to the Victorian Housing Commission in 1946. This was Australia’s first fully factory-manufactured prefabricated steel house,

In 1946 Baldwinson returned to Sydney and formed a partnership with Melbourne engineer, Eric Gibson. As Gibson and Baldwinson, Gibson managed the office in Melbourne and Baldwinson supervised the Sydney office. In this partnership Baldwinson produced his best residential designs for a number of Sydney’s Contemporary Artists Society (CAS) *avant-garde* members. In 1950 he concluded this partnership and applied for a lectureship at Sydney University. By 1952, he was a Senior Lecturer in the architecture faculty.

In 1953, Baldwinson formed a partnership with Charles Vernon Sylvester-Booth; in 1956 Charles Peters joined the firm to form Baldwinson, Booth and Peters. The partnership lasted until 1958 with Baldwinson concentrating on residential designs, which he favoured, while Booth and Peters pursued commercial work. One of their designs, Hotel Belmont, near Newcastle won the NSW RAIA Sulman Award in 1956.

During this partnership, Baldwinson also designed the Mandl House, Wahroonga (1953) and the Simpson-Lee House, Wahroonga (1957). He also designed and built his own residence at 79 Carlotta Street, Greenwich (1954) funded by his teacher’s salary.

Baldwinson’s palette of materials was consistent throughout his practice: bagged brick, weatherboard or vertical tongue-and-groove cladding and concrete contrasted against the irregularities of regional sandstone. Although his partnerships were occasionally involved in commercial commissions, his accomplishments lie in the adaptation of the principles and materials of European modernism for site-specific suburban Australian houses. He helped to pioneer open-plan concepts, site-adjusted residential design, the “scientific kitchen”, flat roof treatments and the functional placement of windows and doors to create a distinctly regional variation of European modernism. In his development of a Sydney-based regional modernism, he is a precursor to the much-debated “Sydney School” of residential architecture of the later 20th century.

Internal disputes forced the dissolution of the Baldwinson, Booth and Peters partnership and Baldwinson immediately formed a new partnership with recent Sydney University graduate Geoffrey Twibill. The partnership lasted until late 1959.

In 1960, Baldwinson closed his formal practice but continued to accept private commissions in the Sydney suburbs, designing the Hauslaib House, Point Piper (1960), the Pennington House, Whale Beach (1960), the Robinson House, Castle Cove (1963) and his last completed house for the artist Desiderius Orban, in Northwood (1968).

The last years of Baldwinson's life were devoted to teaching, heritage studies and travel. In 1969 he died in Sydney from congestive heart failure thought to be a complication of influenza

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THESIS ARGUMENT

This study examines the career of Arthur Baldwinson (1908-1969), a Sydney-based modernist architect. The thesis argues that Baldwinson was a central figure in the development of a modernist domestic architecture in Australia from the late 1930s until the late 1950s through his practice as well as his activist role in the development of the Australian design reform and arts organisations: the Modern Architecture Research Group (MARS); the Designers for Industry Association of Australia (DIAA); and the Contemporary Art Society (CAS). It is further argued that Baldwinson designed and built two of Sydney's first authentically modernist houses before the 1939-45 War and that his subsequent development and refinement of a regional methodology for modernism in Sydney's domestic architecture is at the centre of the later regionalist styles of the late 1950s and early 1960s associated with the "Sydney School".

SYNOPSIS

This thesis examines the career of Arthur Baldwinson (1908-1969), a Sydney-based modernist architect. It argues that Baldwinson was a central figure in the development of a modernist domestic architecture in Australia from the late 1930s until the late 1950s through his practice as well as his activist role in the development of the Australian design reform and arts organisations: the Modern Architecture Research Group (MARS); the Designers for Industry Association of Australia (DIAA); and the Contemporary Art Society (CAS). It is further argued that Baldwinson designed and built two of Sydney's first authentically modernist houses before the 1939-45 War and that his subsequent development and refinement of a regional methodology for modernism in Sydney's domestic architecture is at the centre of the later regionalist styles of the late 1950s and early 1960s currently described as the "Sydney School". The conclusions argue that significant alterations are required in the historical narratives of Sydney modernist architecture to illustrate the presence of an activist modernist community of shared architectural experiences by the late 1930s and Baldwinson's presence at the centre of these developments in domestic architecture.

The research draws on a broad range of primary and secondary sources. These include the Baldwinson papers at the State Library of NSW, other papers in private collections, contemporary photographs, popular and professional press reports, interviews with surviving associates and students of Baldwinson, scholarly published literature and unpublished theses relating to modernism in Australia and Europe, as well as the international development of a regionalist methodology for architecture adapted by Baldwinson and other Australian practitioners.

METHODOLOGY

The thesis takes the form of a chronological account of Baldwinson's career as an architect integrated within a consideration of the development of modernism in Australia between 1920 and 1970. It has been constructed from a number of sources including public and private archival collections, unpublished theses, reports and memoirs, published material including papers and articles by Baldwinson and his contemporaries and later architectural histories. Most significant have been Baldwinson's residential buildings and projects and Greg Holman's undergraduate thesis on Arthur Baldwinson and Holman's catalogue of works.

The study began with a close examination of the three lots of Baldwinson papers in the State Library of NSW. The last grouping of Baldwinson papers (MLMSS 7792) were uncatalogued when the study began and the Manuscripts Section of the State Library allowed me to examine and catalogue this material (17 boxes). The papers included job files on his most important jobs, rough sketches, correspondence, incidental material and photographs associated with these works.

The job files were used to examine Baldwinson's relationships with his clients, particularly his assessments of their particular needs. Photographs and rough site sketches in the job files

(not included in the library catalogues of Baldwinson's plans and drawings) also helped to shape a sense of Baldwinson's methodology in designing his place-specific houses.

Baldwinson's papers associated with his partnerships were closely studied to gain a sense of the interactions between partners and the difficulties that haunted all of his partnership arrangements. Correspondence, drawing signatures and file notes were assessed to determine who had specific design responsibilities within the practices. Legal files prepared for the Baldwinson and Booth partnership split were carefully read to gain a picture of the workings of the practice.

The visual resources of the Baldwinson papers include plans, drawings, photographs and sketches of his design work and all of these were studied as primary records of his design methodologies. Many of the images were copied and studied for use as illustrations in the thesis. Baldwinson's major works were readily identified by the degree of documentation such as sketches, perspectives, plans, elevations and photographs retained for his files; this suggests that he had begun to review and sort his papers before his death.

In addition to Baldwinson's own papers, the personal papers of his colleague Walter Bunning were studied at the National Library of Australia, Canberra for references to Baldwinson and MARS. The Bunning papers were of little or no value in the research on MARS but shed some light on Bunning's career as a writer and supporter of early modernism. The indices and papers of the Stephenson and Turner practice held at the State Library of Victoria and the National Library of Australia were also reviewed for notations on Baldwinson's work within the practice but more information came from interviews and memoirs outside of this collection. For information regarding Baldwinson's teaching career at Sydney University, the University Archives were used to shed light on the Faculty of Architecture's concerns during the period of Baldwinson's lectureship. The records and publications associated with the Contemporary Art Society (CAS), Sydney were inspected through the holdings of the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the CAS membership books in the State Library of New South Wales to gather insight into the earlier supporters of modernism in architecture and the visual arts. The visual resources at the State Library of New South Wales, the State Library of Victoria, National Library of Australia, the National Gallery of Australia, Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Library of Western Australia were also searched for the lesser known work of Baldwinson and related imagery but the most significant grouping of early Baldwinson work was found in the private collection of Chris Wood, Melbourne, whose family had associations with Geelong and the Gordon Institute.

A number of unpublished graduate and postgraduate theses provided insight into the cultural context of Baldwinson's era and the evolution of Australian modernism in Melbourne and Sydney during his lifetime. Walter Gropius's career in Britain is little known and a 1981 thesis by L.H. Cormier on the former Bauhaus leader's UK career was invaluable as she was able to interview many of the principals associated within Gropius during this interlude. Cormier's 1981 thesis inventory of Gropius's UK works also makes a striking comparison between the British work itemised in his 1999 *Catalogue Raisonné* as a number of the architect's lesser UK works identified by Cormier have been omitted from the 1999 inventory.

Interviews were held with members of Baldwinson's brother's surviving family in South Australia as well as more distant relatives in Western Australia. Arthur Baldwinson and his wife Elspeth were childless. However, too much time had passed for an entirely fruitful discussion of his inter-family relationships and personal stature amongst the relatives. Some residual resentment survives amongst the South Australian family of his late brother as Arthur, according to the surviving members, was thought to have received more generous educational privileges.

Interviews were also conducted with several former employees including Ross Thorne, Pamela Jack, Geoffrey Twibill and Sergei Malnic. Their information added further dimensions to the correspondence and shed some light on the difficulties that Baldwinson faced in maintaining a private practice. The interviews, however, shed little or no light on his design strategies and suggested that there may not have been a lot of design dialogue within the practice as Baldwinson worked under severe time constraints. The discovery and interview of the daughter of the West Australian designer John Oldham and her supply of a memoir by her late father helped unravel Baldwinson's first partnership and subsequent involvement in the Modern Architecture Research Society (MARS).

A number of former Baldwinson students were interviewed but these interviews were also tempered by time and the different university culture of the 1950s and 1960s. Certain consistent themes emerged, however, regarding Baldwinson's approach to teaching, his classroom demeanour and his personal modesty regarding his accomplishments. Transcripts of tape recordings undertaken during a lecture series by Docomomo in Sydney (Geoffrey Twibill and Don Gazzard), the National Library of Australia (interviews with Harry Seidler and Morton Herman) and interviews conducted by Paul-Alan Johnson and Susan Lorne Johnson (Pamela Purves Jack) were also sourced and studied for insights into the social and historic context of seminal figures within the discipline. Listings of all personal interviews are included in the References section.

Throughout the late 1930s, Baldwinson wrote extensively for *The Australian Timber Journal* and articulated a strong position on modernist themes such as furniture design, alternative materials such as plywood and the use of timber as an external facing. These short essays demonstrated Baldwinson's rapid absorption of the themes and ideals of early modernism in Britain. The discovery of Baldwinson's typescripts of his public addresses on architecture and aesthetics within the State Library of NSW papers allowed his methodological position in the mid-20th century to be precisely established. These transcripts documented his conversion from the early modernist position associated with the "New Architecture" to the humanistic model of "Regionalism". His commitment to writing lessened after the mid-1950s and suggests that his interests had begun to shift to heritage issues.

Where possible I also visited extant buildings in Victoria and Sydney by Baldwinson and his significant contemporaries. The Baldwinson houses and sites in Sydney, their floorplans and forms too modest for the current era, have often been redeveloped but a number of his prefabricated steel houses in Canberra and Melbourne enjoy heritage protection. No Baldwinson house currently has heritage protection. Site visits were also undertaken to his

former home in Quorn, South Australia, The Gordon Institute, Geelong, Victoria and to locations on the central coast of NSW and Port Kembla, NSW.

A NOTE ON THE SELECTION OF BALDWINSON DESIGNS

The Baldwinson houses and other designs chosen by the writer for investigation were selected on the basis that they represented the more significant designs of the architect's career. The selection was further weighted by the architect's personal assessment of his work as representing designs that he considered the most representative of his work as determined by (1.) the degree of documentation (sketches, presentation drawings, commercial photographs, et cetera) retained in the job files and albums in the Baldwinson papers; (2.) the referencing of his designs in his résumés and personal photograph collection (ref. Sydney University's Faculty of Architecture collection) and appearance in architecture exhibitions; and (3.) the appearances of the houses and/or projects in the professional and popular literature.

There are 513 design works (including Alterations and Additions) represented in the architect's career job listings in Appendix 1 from to December 1938 to 29 July 1969. Baldwinson died on 29 August 1969. As far as can be determined from the architect's job files, a number of client designs did not proceed to working drawings and/or construction. These unbuilt Baldwinson works are identified in the thesis text and labelled as "projects".

ARTHUR BALDWINSON

Arthur Baldwinson is one of Australia's first generation of prominent modernist architects who experienced the European modernist movement first hand. His contemporaries include Roy Grounds and Frederick Romberg in Victoria and Sydney Ancher and Walter Bunning in New South Wales; their respective Australian architectural careers in modernism began in the late 1930s. Baldwinson's active professional career as a practising architect was relatively short (1937-1960) and since his death in 1969, he has been consistently overlooked in the popular surveys of the development of modernist architecture in Sydney.

Baldwinson was born in Kalgoorlie, West Australia in 1908. He trained in architecture (1925-1929) under George R. King, the head of the architecture programme at the Gordon Institute of Technology, Geelong, Victoria. Baldwinson's work, especially in the areas of drawing and rendering, was exemplary and this led King to ask him to stay on as 'Architectural Instructor'. Baldwinson held a teaching position from 1930 until 1932 when he left for London.

In London, Baldwinson was first employed in the office of Raymond McGrath, an architecture graduate from the University of Sydney. Whilst there, Baldwinson worked with talents like Serge Chermayeff and Wells Coates. McGrath's practice included designing the interiors for the BBC's studios at Portland Place, London. Concurrently with work, McGrath was compiling an international survey of residential modernism for publication, *Twentieth Century Houses* (1934); some of the plans that accompany the photographs appear to be drawn by Baldwinson.

In mid-1934, Baldwinson worked for the firm Adams Thompson and Fry during the period when principal partner and co-founder of MARS (Modern Architectural Research group), Maxwell Fry, in collaboration with social reformer Elizabeth Denby, was designing the progressive, modernist housing scheme for the Gas Light and Coke Company, Kensal House in Ladbroke Grove, London.¹

In October 1934, Fry formed a partnership with Walter Gropius with whom Baldwinson worked directly until early 1937. Gropius departed for the United States in March 1937. Baldwinson was actively involved in the design and drawings of Gropius's commissions including: Isokon 3 medium density project, Windsor; the E. W. Levy House, Chelsea; the Donaldson House, Sevenoaks; the Impington Village College, Cambridgeshire and the Christ's College project for Cambridge University.²

In January 1937, Baldwinson began his return trip to Australia imbued with a determination to plant the flag of "the new architecture"; he took up a position with Stephenson & Meldrum, first in their Melbourne office, then later in Sydney.^{3 4}

In early 1938 Baldwinson entered the annual Victorian Timber Development Association (TDA) prize for residential timber buildings and won in three categories.⁵ Soon after this success, he established his own practice in Pitt Street, Sydney. In 1938-1939, he formed a brief design partnership with fellow-West Australian, John Oldham (Oldham & Baldwinson) to design a housing project near Coomaditchy Lagoon, Port Kembla, New South Wales. Although widely supported by the regional media, it did not proceed.⁶

In 1938, Baldwinson had his first solo commission, the Collins House at Palm Beach; the site was difficult, on a steep north-facing sandstone and clay slope with extensive views of Barrenjoey Head and Broken Bay. The house received considerable media attention when it was completed and was later used as the cover illustration for George Beiers's *Houses of Australia. A Survey of Domestic Architecture* of 1948 and reproduced in *The Architectural Review's* 1948 survey, "The Architecture of Australia" issue.

Before the 1939-45 War disrupted his career, Baldwinson played a pioneering role in the founding an Australian MARS group and the reform-driven Design and Industries Association of Australia (DIAA), while focusing on designing modernist houses, drawing on

¹ Kensal House comprised sixty-eight two-or three bedroom apartments and fitted with balconies, designed and oriented for parkland views, sunlight and ventilation.

² Drawings for these works are in the Baldwinson Papers, State Library of NSW.

³ By late 1937, the practice became known as Stephenson & Turner. Although two Stephenson & Turner works have been assigned to Baldwinson: the ACI Building, William Street, Sydney and the portico for the King George V Hospital, Camperdown, there is no supporting evidence in his papers for this attribution.

⁴ Architects who worked in the firm at this time included Best Overend, Mary (Molly) Turner Shaw, Tom O'Mahony, John Oldham, Frederick Romberg.

⁵ Baldwinson's three prize-winning houses: '£500, £850 and £2000', were later published in NSW Timber Development Association publications in 1939.

⁶ Greg Holman, *Arthur Baldwinson. His Houses and Works*. UNSW Hons. Thesis, 1980, vol.1, p.79. . This was organised by the South Coast Housing Committee (operational from December 1938 to August 1939).

what he learnt from McGrath, Gropius and Fry. The architect's design work was widely reported in the professional and popular media of the era.

During the Second World War, Baldwinson worked for the Commonwealth Aircraft Factory designing and constructing buildings engaged in the manufacture of Beaufort Bombers. By 1943, he had been promoted Chief Architect of the Beaufort Division, Department of Aircraft Production (DAP). Baldwinson later developed an all-steel pre-fabricated 'Beaufort' house for DAP post-war sale to the Victorian Housing Commission in 1946.⁷ Although the Beaufort House received considerable media exposure in Melbourne and Canberra, it did not appear in the architectural press until 1950.

In 1946 Baldwinson returned to Sydney and formed a partnership with the Melbourne engineer, Eric Gibson. In this partnership Baldwinson produced many of his best residential designs for clients including Alistair Morrison, William Dobell, Harold Clay, Geoff and Dahl Collings, James Andriesse, Max Dupain and Elaine Haxton.⁸ Postwar, These works form a group best described as 'Artists Houses' and they were photographed by Max Dupain and widely reported in the professional and popular media. Baldwinson was an active member of Sydney's Contemporary Art Society (CAS) and initiated the Society's annual exhibition programme of modern architecture that began in 1949. In 1950 he concluded his partnership with Gibson and in early 1951 applied for a lectureship at Sydney University. By 1952, he was a Senior Lecturer in the architecture faculty.

In 1953, Baldwinson formed a partnership with Charles Vernon Sylvester-Booth and maintained his teaching position. In 1956 Charles Peters joined the firm to form Baldwinson, Booth and Peters. The partnership lasted until 1958 with Baldwinson concentrating on residential designs, which he favoured, while Booth and Peters pursued commercial work. One of their designs, the Belmont Hotel, in the Newcastle suburb of Belmont won the NSW RAI A Sulman Award in 1956. Baldwinson's work during this partnership was well-published and he was invited to exhibit in the architecture section of the Arts Festival associated with the 1956 Olympics, Melbourne. After 1956, Baldwinson's architectural profile in the print media began to wane as he moved toward a private practice.

Internal disputes forced the dissolution of the Baldwinson, Booth and Peters partnership and Baldwinson immediately formed a short-lived partnership with recent Sydney University graduate Geoffrey Twibill. The partnership lasted until late 1959. In 1960, Baldwinson closed his formal practice but continued to accept private commissions in the Sydney suburbs, designing the Hauslaib House, Point Piper (1960), the Pennington House, Whale Beach (1960), the Robinson House, Castle Cove (1963) and his last completed house for the CAS artist Desiderius Orban, in Northwood (1968).

By the time that J.L. Freeland's survey work *Architecture in Australia, A History* appeared in 1968, Baldwinson's role in the development of Sydney modernism had been reduced to a single line.⁹ This omission was redressed by Richard Apperly's Master of Architecture thesis

⁷ 'The Beaufort Home, Prefabricated in Steel', *Architecture*, October-December 1950, pp.132-133.

⁸ Most of the clients were members of the Contemporary Art Society, Sydney.

⁹ J.M. Freeland. *Architecture in Australia. A History*. Cheshire, 1968, p.277.

“Sydney Houses 1914-1939” of 1972 where Baldwinson received his first thorough appreciation.¹⁰

D.L. Johnson’s widely cited work, *Australian Architecture 1901-51. Sources of Modernism* appeared in 1978 and contained the Freeland-inspired standardised narrative of Sydney modernism.¹¹ Baldwinson’s domestic work is ignored in favour of an oblique reference to the prefabricated Beaufort House designed during the later years of the 1939-45 war and a passing reference (and illustration) to the William Dobell House project of 1947.

Baldwinson’s work was revived in 1980 by another scholarly work, Greg Holman’s “Arthur Baldwinson, His Houses and Works”, an undergraduate thesis from the University of NSW. Holman notes and criticises Baldwinson’s absence from the Sydney modernism narratives and provides an invaluable listing of the architect’s works from the 1930s to the late 1960s.

Despite the discoveries of the Holman thesis, the next major survey work, the essays in Robert Irving and Richard Apperly’s *The History and Design of the Australian House of 1985* fail to write on the architect’s career or illustrate Baldwinson’s work.¹² Philip Goad’s PhD thesis, “The Modern House in Melbourne 1945-1975” completed in 1992 redresses this omission. In Chapter 5 in the thesis, “Melbourne, Harry Seidler and the East Coast International Style”, Goad places Baldwinson in his context as a pioneering Sydney modernist. He acknowledges Baldwinson’s British sympathies and his early contribution to modernism in Sydney and points out that the “surge toward the architecture of Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer [represented by Seidler] are not the first manifestations of such in Australian architecture”. The thesis is the first to recognise the echoes of Baldwinson’s British modernist experience and concludes, “these [Baldwinson works] are not the pristine cubes of the East Coast work of Gropius and Breuer. Baldwinson’s houses are skilful regional interpretations, transplanting a humanised modernism already accomplished after being transplanted from Germany to England.”¹³

Goad’s 1992 position on Baldwinson is supported by Harry Margalit’s 1997 PhD thesis, “Reasoning To Believe: Aspects of Modernity in Sydney Architecture and Planning 1900-1960” from the Power Department of Fine Arts, University of Sydney examines the career of Raymond McGrath in detail and investigates the early work of Baldwinson while pursuing his primary research on McGrath and Walter Bunning. He first observes that two of McGrath’s employees, Arthur Baldwinson and Roy Grounds, are “... amongst the most influential proponents of modernist buildings (as distinct from modernist polemics) in Sydney and Melbourne respectively”.¹⁴ Baldwinson is well-integrated into Margalit’s discussion of modernism in Sydney.

¹⁰ Richard Apperly. “Sydney Houses 1914-1939.” Master of Architecture Thesis, UNSW, 1972. Vol. 1, p.242.

¹¹ D.L. Johnson. *Australian Architecture 1901-51. Sources of Modernism*. University of Sydney Press, 1980, pps.85-137.

¹² Maisy Stapleton. “Between the Wars.” Robert Irving, Richard Apperly, et al. *The History and Design of the Australian House*. Oxford University Press, 1985, p.136.

¹³ Philip Goad. “The Modern House in Melbourne 1945-1975.” PhD thesis. University of Melbourne, 1992, pps.5/64-5/65.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.123.

Since the 1980s, Australian scholars have questioned the predominance of orthodox modernism. A number of studies have also emerged putting forward an alternative claim for regionalism. For example, many of the regionalist themes identified by Baldwinson and John D. Moore have been reinforced and strengthened locally by the work of Winsome Callister, Philip Goad, Doug Evans and Harriet Edquist and internationally, by Peter Frampton and Vincent Canizaro's recent anthology on regionalism.

Jennifer Taylor's 1972 study *Houses for Sydney* was the strongest argument at the time for a regionalist "Sydney School", yet it did not include Baldwinson.¹⁵ Unpublished theses have proved to be much more innovative and insightful than the published architectural histories. Greg Holman's 1980 undergraduate thesis established the basic outline of Baldwinson's career and provided special insight into his practice through interviews with principals now deceased. The theses of Richard Apperly, Phillip Goad and Harry Margalit all positioned Baldwinson as a modernist innovator, identified the major (and occasionally, the minor) participants and provided a contextual setting and the critical framework for Sydney's modernist developments.

This thesis seeks to expand on the earlier scholarly studies of the conditions surrounding early modernism by investigating Baldwinson's role in the development of key modernist organisations such as the Sydney MARS group, the reform-driven DIAA and the Contemporary Arts Society as platforms for the development and dissemination of his modernist views on architecture and design. The discovery of two of Baldwinson's recorded mid-20th century aesthetic statements on his architectural methodology also allows his residential commissions to be re-assessed within the framework of a well-established position that includes his spirited rejection of the formalism of European modernism, the articulation of a strong regionalist philosophy and a commitment to a humanist philosophy for modern architecture. The contemporary writings of Baldwinson's regionalist allies and opposition are identified, assessed and compared to Baldwinson's position.

Within the progress of Baldwinson's career during 1939-45 War, the development of the prefabricated steel Beaufort House is examined for the first time within the context of wartime manufacturing and the design development of the numerous British prefabricated wartime houses. Drawing on records in the National Archive of Australia, a case study is also provided of the Beaufort House in use.

The thesis also identifies and explores Baldwinson's partnerships in detail and the Baldwinson papers now allow individual design responsibilities within the practice to be re-assigned. The study identifies his personal views of the 1956 Sulman Award given to his practice for a commercial hotel.

The thesis is constructed as a chronological narrative in 13 chapters. The introduction establishes the thesis argument, methodology and provides a review of the literature supporting the argument. Baldwinson's youth is explored in Chapter 2 as well as his formal architectural training and the context of Melbourne architecture during this period.

¹⁵ Jennifer Taylor. *An Australian Identity. Houses for Sydney*. Faculty of Architecture, University of Sydney Press, 1972.

Baldwinson's British experiences from 1932 to 1937 are then investigated in Chapter 3. He was immediately exposed to the modernism of the "New Architecture" and first employed in the office of the Sydney University architecture graduate Raymond McGrath. In mid-1934, Baldwinson went to work for Adams Thompson and Fry while one of the principals, Maxwell Fry (b.1899) was designing his famous commission with Elizabeth Denby, the Kensal House flats. In October 1934, Walter Gropius formed a partnership with Maxwell Fry and Baldwinson worked with Gropius until the former Bauhaus master's departure for the USA in March 1937.

In Chapter 4, Baldwinson returns to Australia and is immersed in the architectural context of late 1930s modernism, his work with Stephenson & Turner, the establishment of his private practice and his first residential modernist commissions and projects in Australia. From a new base in Sydney, Baldwinson becomes one of the founding members of a number of reform-driven organizations explored in Chapter 5.

Chapter 6 looks at his career during the 1939-45 War as he works on the development of a "factory-made" prefabricated steel house during his assignment to the Commonwealth Aircraft Factory designing and constructing buildings for the manufacture of the Beaufort Bomber. At the conclusion of the war, the Gibson and Baldwinson partnership is established in Chapter 7 and signals Baldwinson's post-war return to domestic architecture within the milieu of the Sydney-based modernists investigated in Chapter 8.

The architect's most creative period occurs within the Gibson and Baldwinson partnership through clients drawn from the ranks of the Contemporary Artists Society (CAS). These commissions provide him with the opportunity to develop and refine a design methodology that responds sensitively to site conditions such as vegetation and topography. These "Artists' Houses" are examined in Chapter 9. He later forms a partnership with Charles Sylvester-Booth in 1953 and later Charles Peters who joins them in 1956 to form Baldwinson, Booth and Peters. Their practice is assessed in Chapter 10. This chapter examines some of the regionalist precedents the Baldwinson practice established for a new generation of architects.

During his later partnerships discussed in Chapter 11, Baldwinson continued to produce significant work designing the Mandl House, Wahroonga (1953) and the Simpson-Lee House, Wahroonga (1957) as well as his own residence at 79 Carlotta Street, Greenwich (1954). In 1960, Baldwinson closed his formal practice but continued to work sporadically. Amongst his later commissions, he designed the Hauslaib House, Point Piper (1960), the Robinson House, Castle Cove (1963) as well as his last completed house for the CAS artist Desiderius Orban, Northwood (1968). Chapter 12 identifies Baldwinson's typologies and strategies in building plans that he developed in his pursuit of a humanist modernism tailored for the Sydney region. In 1969 he died in Sydney from congestive heart failure.

The conclusion in Chapter 13 assesses his contribution to Sydney's domestic modernism. His personal accomplishments lie in the adaptation of the principles and materials of Anglo-European modernism for the small-scale suburban Australian house. The structures embrace the landscape with careful plan adjustments for mature trees and topography. He helped to

pioneer open-plan concepts, the “scientific kitchen”, flat roof treatments, function-derived placement of windows and doors and place-centred planning.

The Appendices include a listing of all recorded Baldwinson works building on and expanding Greg Holman’s thesis, a section exploring Baldwinson’s career in the Faculty of Architecture, Sydney University, an expanded list of known members of the Sydney MARS and its fragmentary history, a summary of Baldwinson’s association with the Australian *camoufleur* movement during the 1939-45 War, an abbreviated history of the Timber Development Association, an organisation that was intimately involved in Baldwinson’s early career and a listing of Baldwinson’s exhibition work.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AUSTRALIAN MODERNISM

Modernism and Travel

Travel to the United Kingdom, Europe and occasionally North America, was an essential catalyst for the development of Australian modernism in the 1930s for as Conrad Hamann has observed, “Australian modernism, based as it was in those earlier forms [i.e. the Moderne style of the 1920s] was, in the international sense, obsolete as soon as it began.”¹⁶

Most of the early 20th century Australian architectural travellers returned to share their experiences with their community. A 1930 address by the architect and lecturer Leighton Irwin to the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects (RVIA) on his return from a North American tour is typical. Irwin defined the principal themes of modernism based on his experiences. The text of this lecture was later published in the *RVIA Journal*.¹⁷

Irwin was the Director of the Melbourne University Architectural Atelier after 1925 and President of the RVIA after 1931. His views (and his lecture) would have received special attention in Victoria where Baldwinson was training at the Gordon Institute, Geelong. Irwin was an influential teacher and Julie Willis considers that in his Atelier classes, modernism was the common language amongst students by 1930.¹⁸

Leighton Irwin condemned historicism in his address by saying that, “I have long felt that there is something wrong where an architect spends a great deal of his student days in making himself so familiar with the past that he is able to-day to reproduce a Grecian temple, complete with flutes *entasis* and call it a "church" or a "cinema." [...] Is he doing a service to the public, which he serves and I have to admit doubts? [...] Old forms will not fit new functions.”

¹⁶ Conrad Hamann. “Roy Grounds, Frederick Romberg and Robin Boyd.” *Architects of Australia*. Howard Tanner, ed. MacMillan, 1982, p.129.

¹⁷ Leighton Irwin. “The Trend of Design as shown in Modern Architecture.” *RVIA Journal*. 18:July 1930, pps.65-74, reprinted in Ann Stephen, et al. *Modernism and Australia*, pps.258-270.

¹⁸ Julie Willis. “Conscious Design. The Melbourne University Architectural Atelier 1919-1947.” *Fabrications*. v.13: 2, May 2004. pps.43-62.

Leighton Irwin also spoke at length about the use of new construction materials such as architectural scale glass and concrete that he had seen during his travels. “Side by side with these more or less abstract influences on architecture [standardisation, speed, machine fabrication] are the influences wielded by the material ones, steel, concrete and glass. These things are all tremendously in evidence in the new buildings and particularly [...] the use of glass, for this at the present time is enormous and extraordinary, particularly in colder countries where they are endeavouring to get every possible amount of warmth and fresh air into their buildings.”

“Concrete in its plastic form surrounding steel has given us such opportunity that we seem to have even hardly begun to master its intricacies. [...] The synthetic covering is an extraordinarily interesting thing also.”

In Sydney, K.H. McConnel aired similar views in an illustrated lecture to the Institute of Architects of NSW (IANSW) in 1930. McConnel had been overseas from 1925-27. He was certain of his audience when, like Leighton Irwin in Melbourne, he said, “We all know that a new era has begun in architectural design. Men in all countries are no longer satisfied to be hampered in their expression of new ideas by traditions which have their origin away back in an age which had little in common with the architecture of today and are now using new methods of construction and materials. This desire for freedom is not in any way extraordinary. What is extraordinary is that the revolt did not occur long ago.”¹⁹

Stimulated by the reports of Australian architects returning from international travels, aided by scholarships and lured by the illustrations from the *Architectural Review* amongst other European professional journals, Europe was an important chapter in the education of many Australian modernist architects.

One of the first attempts to document this phenomenon, the scholar David Saunders wrote an 1977 essay for *Architecture Australia* with a jocular title, “So I decided to go overseas” that indirectly initiated a series of investigations on the role of travel in the development of what Saunders called the “Principled Modernists”.²⁰ That is, architects who had experienced modernism first hand in Europe and North America rather than through magazine illustrations, and then returned to Australia to practice. The second instalment of “So I decided to go overseas” was a personal account written by Harold Bartlett, who, like Baldwinson was a Gordon Institute graduate.²¹

D.L. Johnson also reviewed the importance of travel in shaping the development of modern architecture in Australia in his 1980 volume, *Sources of Modernism 1901-1950. Sources of Modernism*, and stressed the importance of travelling scholarships awarded by the professional organisations in Victoria and NSW. Johnson notes the importance of the published reports (often in the journal *Architecture*), public addresses and illustrated lectures

¹⁹ K.H. McConnel. “The Trend of present-day architecture in Sydney and Abroad.” *Architecture*. June 1930, pps.424-429. Reprinted in Ann Stephens, et al. op cit. pps.260-279.

²⁰ David Saunders. “So I decided to go overseas.” [Pt. 1], *Architecture Australia*, Feb./March 1977, pps.22-28.

²¹ Harold Bartlett. “So I decided to go overseas.” Pt 2, *Architecture Australia*, Feb./March 1978, pps.44-45. (Bartlett later became a principal of Leith and Bartlett)

that were a requirement of the NSW award recipients.²² Selections of recipients of NSW travel awards include the prominent modernists Raymond McGrath, Sydney Ancher, Morton Herman, Dudley Ward, G.R.B. McDonnell and Frank Costello. Their reports were often published or given as formal lectures attended by the profession. Taken together, these early reports and recordings are fundamental documents in the development of Australian modernism and as Johnson asserts, “the reports were of inestimable value in bringing back, often after five or six years [...] an authoritative empirically gained knowledge”.²³

Baldwinson, one of Australia’s early “Principled Modernists” went on his self-funded pilgrimage to London in 1932 and found work with Australian expatriate Raymond McGrath (Sydney University), later taking up an appointment with Maxwell Fry, then Gropius and Fry. Architects like Melbourne’s Percy Meldrum and Leighton Irwin had preceded Baldwinson and others of his generation. Sydney’s John D. Moore had served in the 1914-18 War and stayed on to teach and study at London’s Architectural Association (AA).²⁴ While Britain often provided Baldwinson’s generation with their first exposure to modernism, his generation were able to travel more widely during the peaceful postwar years when stable governments prevailed in central Europe.

Philip Goad’s 2003 essay “Modernism and Australian Architecture” further extends the study of travel as a catalyst for the development of an Australian modernism.²⁵ In particular, Goad argues “... the perspective of distance [...] enabled a critical filter by which to expand the architectural repertoire. In the 1930s, European modernism seemed to offer release from the symbolic mantle of Empire, a tie that had held it for decades.”

Undoubtedly, there was a social and cultural element in their travels but for the architects it was their first opportunity to see buildings designed in the “New Architecture.” Baldwinson confided to his British diary in 1934, “Discovered on the hill overlooking Amersham, the famous High and Over modern house that I had seen illustrated in the architecture journals. I was absolutely delighted with it. Actually, it was my first experience of seeing a first rate modern house”.²⁶ He later summarised the importance of travel to personal development in a public address in 1952. “On visiting England and Europe in 1932,” he said, “I had my first experience of the New Architecture and quickly came to realise that the methods of adapting antique architecture to present day building types, changed social ways, new structural inventions and machine production was superficial in the extreme [...]”.²⁷

²² D.L. Johnson. *Sources of Modernism 1901-1950*. Sydney University Press, 1980, p.89-91. Typical responses to travel include Sydney Ancher. “The Evolution of Modern Architecture.” *Architecture*. 1 December 1939, pps.247-249, Henry Pynor, “An Architectural Foreign Specialist in Russia.” *Architecture*. 1 May 1937, pps.96-101 or L.F Irwin. “Trend of Design as shown in Modern Architecture.” *RVIA Journal*, v.18, July 1930, pps.65-74. Also Reprinted in Ann Stephen, et al. *Modernism and Australia. Documents on Art, Design and Architecture. 1917-1967*. Melbourne University Press, 2006.

²³ D.L. Johnson. *Sources of Modernism 1901-1950*. Sydney University Press, 1980, p.91.

²⁴ Cedric Flower, ‘Moore, John Drummond Macpherson (1888 - 1958)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 10, Melbourne University Press, 1986, pp 566-567.

²⁵ Philip Goad. “Modernism and Australian Architecture.” *DOCOMOMO*. no.29, September 2003.

²⁶ *ibid.*, 22 April 1934 entry.

²⁷ Arthur Baldwinson. “My Aesthetics.” Address to the Society of Sculptors and Associates, 9 May 1952. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792.

Baldwinson moved amongst the Australian expatriate community in Britain and established relationships that continued through his working life. Many of Baldwinson's generation sought and found placements with London-based modernists of the standard of Raymond McGrath (Roy Grounds), H.S. Goodhart Rendel (Rae Featherstone, Baldwinson's flatmate) Wells Coates (Best Overend, Baldwinson's colleague), Joseph Emberton (Sydney Ancher), Atkinson and Anderson (Winsome Hall and Sydney MARS members Hedley Carr and Morton Herman) and Easton Hall and Robertson (Mary Turner Shaw).²⁸

Some years after the appearance of Saunders' 1977 survey, "So I decided to go overseas", Paul-Alan Johnson and Susan Lorne-Johnson reinforced the topic of travel through their five-volume study of *Architects of the Middle Third. Interviews with NSW Architects who commenced practice in the 1930s and 1940s*.²⁹ Their wide-ranging interviews also investigated the travel experiences of their subjects while allowing each architect to express their personal responses to their travels. Their interviews show that collectively, this group ("The Middle Third") recognised the importance of overseas travel.

Amongst the Johnson study of Baldwinson-generation travelling architects (born ca.1910) were MARS member Nigel Ashton (Europe, Scandinavia, North America), MARS member Maurice Charles Edward (UK and Europe), Max Collard, (Europe, UK, Finland), MARS member Tom O'Mahony (UK, Scandinavia, USA, Europe), MARS member John Overall (UK, Middle East where he met Erich Mendelsohn in Palestine), Felix Taverner (UK, Germany, Asia) and Ivor Tacon (UK and Europe).³⁰ Their experience of the "new architecture" in the late 1920s and 1930s was central to the development of what was to develop into an Australian modernism. Many of these expatriates returned to Australia and became active members of the reform-minded Sydney MARS group initiated by Baldwinson and his associates.

Modernism and Exhibitions

Exhibitions in Sydney in the late 1930s also played an important role in establishing modernism amongst the design professionals. In some cases, examples of Europe's New Architecture travelled to Sydney and Melbourne as early as 1927. Two exhibitions, the touring 1927 International Architectural Exhibition (Melbourne and Sydney) and the 1929 Burdekin House exhibition of interior design in Sydney's Macquarie Street, anticipated the enthusiasm for the modern movement by a decade.

The International Architecture Exhibition, organised by the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects (RVIA) through contacts with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), was opened by Stanley Bruce, the Prime Minister, who spoke at length and noted that his Ministry was determined to "not make the same [architectural] mistakes [in Canberra] that

²⁸ Saunders. op. cit., pps.22-28.

²⁹ Paul-Alan Johnson and Susan Lorne-Johnson, editors. *Architects of the Middle Third. Interviews with NSW Architects who commenced practice in the 1930s and 1940s*. School of Architecture, UNSW. Vol.1 (1992), vol. 2 (1995), vol. 3, (1996), vol. 4 (1997), vol. 5 (1997).

³⁰ *ibid.* A 2009 index to this work lists the foreign travel of the five volumes of the interviews. *Name Index. Architects of the Middle Third*. Compiled by Michael Bogle for the NSW RAIA. 1st edition, May 2009.

had been made at Washington [DC].”³¹ This exhibition has been closely surveyed by Goad in a 2002 paper “Australian Reception. The International Architecture Exhibition in Melbourne” who noted the poor reception given to Middle European (Czech and German) examples of the New Architecture.³² On the other hand, more conventional work from the Dominions and the United States found favour amongst reviewers. The German work was disconcerting for much of the Melbourne daily press.

As Goad observes, *The Age* (Melbourne) found the German work aggressive and “uncompromising”. *The Argus* (Melbourne) reviewer described the German selection of the exhibition as “Primitive” and found that the work [...] is typical of the artistic revolt of the country. [...] The style if it can be called so, is brutally primitive and [...] the crudeness is unpleasing to anyone who takes pleasure in grace of form.” Ultimately, Goad considers that “the overall response to the European exhibits was polite disdain and grudging acknowledgement of its originality.”³³

Australian Home Beautiful, a popular magazine in its second year of publication observed the German illustrations of New Architecture (sixty plus including lithographs) “were very similar in character, and carried the same note of cold severity throughout [...]. It was an extremely interesting revelation of the most recent tendency in the handling of mass; but the barrack-like apartment houses, hotels and offices, though really comfortable within, are quite unpleasing in their exterior lines.”³⁴ From this reluctant beginning, *Australian Home Beautiful* became one of modernism’s most consistent Australian supporters.

When the exhibition toured to Sydney, it was installed in the galleries of the Education Building where British expatriate Professor Leslie Wilkinson quite naturally found the work of Britain and the Dominions exhibiting “an interesting modern manner all its own”. On the other hand, he found that while the domestic and industrial building exhibited by Germany illustrated economic refinements in structure, surface treatments and materials, the “majority of the housing schemes are clothed in barrack-like exteriors”.³⁵ While the Czechs illustrated similar reductive modernist designs, Wilkinson found their work displayed “much originality in the handling of more commonplace problems”.³⁶

³¹ “Architecture Show.” *The [Melbourne] Argus*, 8 June 1927, p.14. Bruce does not expand on his allusion to Washington’s problems although *The Canberra Times* of 21 June 1927 considered that the address of the Prime Minister “... fell happily in a period when architects are working quietly toward the development of an Australian style of architecture [in Canberra].”

³² Philip Goad. “Australian Reception. The International Architecture Exhibition in Melbourne, 1927.” Paper, 7th International Docomomo Conference, Paris, 2002. Published in J-Y. Andrieux, et al. *La Reception de l’architecture du Mouvement Moderne*. Universite Sainte Etienne, France, 2005, pps.385-390. See also Philip Goad, “Modernism and Australian Architecture.” *DOCOMOMO*, no.29, September 2003.

³³ *ibid.*, p.388.

³⁴ “The First International Architectural Exhibition.” *Australian Home Beautiful*, July 1927, pps.15-19, reprinted in Ann Stephens, et al. *Modernism in Australia*, op. cit., pps.239-242.

³⁵ The consistent analogies to militarism (“aggressive”, barracks-like, “brutal”) in the reviews may reflect residual sentiment from Germany’s role in the 1914-18 War.

³⁶ Leslie Wilkinson. “International Architectural Exhibition. The Exhibits.” *Architecture*. 1 August 1927, pps.146-148. Reprinted in Ann Stephens, et al. *Modernism in Australia*, op. cit., pps.239-242.

Quite a different reception for the New Architecture was offered the following year by the architect Henry Pynor writing in *The Home* in October 1928 where the development of German modernism was surveyed through the lens of Walter Gropius and the Dessau Bauhaus. Examining the Gropius-designed Dessau housing of the masters, he finds that “They indicate a new movement that has come to stay.”³⁷ In the following year, Pynor had an opportunity to illustrate his approach to modernism through rooms that he co-designed with Frank Wietzel for the ground-breaking 1929 Burdekin House exhibition.

The Burdekin House exhibition, organised in part by *Art in Australia* publisher Sydney Ure Smith, featured a selection of Australian-designed modern interiors and furniture by contemporary artists, architects and designers of the stature of Roy de Maistre, Henry Pynor, Thea Proctor, Adrian Feint and Frank Weitzel above two levels of antiques in this three-level Georgian-style townhouse in Macquarie Street. “Where are the modern rooms?” was the most persistent question at the Burdekin House exhibition wrote one observer, “With a cry of relief, they have almost leaped up the stairs. ...Most of the antagonism [toward the modern interiors] which has been noted so far emanates from the collector, the antique dealer and the un-enterprising architect. ... They see the demon of modernity greedily snatching at their bread and butter...”³⁸

The Burdekin House catalogue introduction, “Modern Interior Decoration” by Leon Gellert, linked the “modern rooms” with a new ideology: “Modernism eliminates all that is unnecessary,” he wrote, “and is in agreement with the whole world-movement toward simplification as exemplified in modern dress, modern architecture, modern art, modern hygiene...”³⁹

Sydney’s Modern Architecture Research Society (MARS) provided the first formal platform for the exhibition of Australian modernist architecture. Arthur Baldwinson and other young contemporary architects and engineers established this organisation in Sydney in March 1938. Discussed in detail in Chapter 5, the philosophical precedents of the European MARS organisation (1933-1957) informed the Sydney MARS group (1938-1946). The Australian mission was “The furtherance of the Modern Movement in Architecture and the Allied Arts. [...] Amongst our efforts are lectures, articles, radio talks, exhibitions and hypothetical designs. We feel that these modest achievements will have justified our formation if they have created even the slightest public interest in our ideals and helped to bring the Profession back to its rightful position amongst the leaders of contemporary thought and public affairs.”⁴⁰ Many, if not all of the MARS group had seen European modernism first hand through overseas travel and employment.

³⁷ Henry Pynor. “A brief note on the aims and ideals of the Bauhaus.”. *The Home*, 1 October 1928, pps.48-49. This same issue contains excerpts from the recently released translation of Le Corbusier’s *Toward a New Architecture*

³⁸ “The Case for Modernity.” *The Home*. 1 November 1929, pps.53-58 and *The Burdekin House Exhibition*. exhibition catalogue. Committee of the Burdekin House Exhibition, Sydney, 1929 [unpaginated].

³⁹ *The Burdekin House Exhibition*. exhibition catalogue. Committee of the Burdekin House Exhibition, Sydney, 1929 [unpaginated].

⁴⁰ *Angle*. 5:1941. Baldwinson Papers, MLMSS 1993, Further Papers, Box 4/5. See also Holman, op. cit., p.89-90.

In July 1939, the Sydney MARS group participated in a “Better Homes” exhibition at the David Jones (Department Store) Art Gallery sponsored by the Timber Development Association and the NSW Forestry Commission.⁴¹ The MARS section was titled “Well Designed Houses are Cheaper” and featured models, plans and elevations (illustrated in Chapter 5) by MARS members including Baldwinson, Walter Bunning, Morton Herman and others. “Better Homes” also featured competitors from the 1939 Timber Homes Competition sponsored by the Timber Development Association of Victoria.

The Sydney-based Design and Industries Association of Australia (DIAA), was also a highly visible advocate for modernism in design and architecture with an agenda for exhibitions.⁴² It was established on 30 January 1940.⁴³ British expatriate R. Haughton James, the Honourable Secretary of the DIAA, was an energetic publicist and appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Sydney Ure Smith’s *Australia National Journal* and other publications.⁴⁴ James told the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the Executive Committee of the DIAA that included Baldwinson (the sole architect), Douglas Annand and publisher Sydney Ure Smith (and eight other representatives) was planning an exhibition for later in the year. Their aim was to “improve the design of all things [that] Australians live with and use”.⁴⁵ Baldwinson’s Collins House, Palm Beach was used to illustrate their first newspaper feature. Modern architecture was inseparable from their goals.

The DIAA had great ambitions. “Architects, town planners, photographers, painters, industrial and commercial designers will confer with industrialists...”. “A National Register of Designers is to be formed and most useful of all are plans for an exhibition of designs and well-designed goods to be held later in the year.”⁴⁶ Although the proposed exhibition was not held, perhaps due to the pressures of the 1939-45 War, designs for a 1940 DIAA exhibition (“Good Design is Primarily Fitness for Purpose.”) were prepared by Baldwinson and his friend and associate Douglas Annand.⁴⁷

The DIAA had additional allies in its support of modernism. Further providing some momentum to the discussion about modernism and Bauhaus philosophy, the little-known Australian Commercial and Industrial Artists Association (ACIAA) also held their first exhibition later in 1940 in the new Australasian Wireless Association (AWA) building in Sydney (by Robertson, Marks and McCredie) with the aim that “...experience in the

⁴¹ “Economy and Grace. The 1939 Better Homes Exhibition.” *Art in Australia*, 15 August 1939, pps.79-82.

⁴² This organisation with a new name, the Society of Designers for Industry, (and its aims unaltered) was revived in Melbourne in 1947 by R. Haughton James, Fred Ward, Grant Featherston and others. (See Chapter 5). Michael Bogle. “The Society of Designers for Industry.” in *Design in Australia*, Craftsman House, 1998, p.113-117.

⁴³ “New Association.” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 January 1940.

⁴⁴ “Linking Design and Industry.” Women’s Supplement, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 January 1940 and “Why we formed the Design and Industries Association of Australia.” *Australia National Journal*. 4:1940 (Autumn), pps.8a-8b.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p.8a.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p.8b.

⁴⁷ Baldwinson’s design, PXD 356, f.428 (a977001h), Douglas Annand’s design (mis-attributed to Baldwinson) MLMSS 1993, f.422.

workshop will be part of the industrial designer's training, a system first established at the famous Bauhaus school in Weimar, and now operating in Chicago".⁴⁸

Australia's intensifying wartime mobilisation brought the emerging exhibitions programme to a halt as many of the MARS and DIAA members were called up for military service or strategic roles in design, construction or manufacturing of military assets. The postwar demobilisation programme and the readjustment to peacetime activities lingered through the 1940s. The NSW RAIA held its first postwar exhibition, "Architecture Today and Tomorrow" (designed by Baldwinson and Tom O'Mahony) in 1952 at Sydney's Blaxland Galleries in Farmer's Department Store.⁴⁹

A number of the members of the 1930s exhibiting groups such as the ACIAA and the DIAA were later to become architectural clients of Baldwinson including Alistair Morrison, Geoff and Dahl Collings, Elaine Haxton and Douglas Annand. These commissions are discussed and illustrated in Chapter 9.

Modernism and Émigré Architects

Many of the émigré architects, planners and designers from central Europe who began to appear in Australia in the late 1930s were able to speak from direct experience of the New Architecture and their legendary teachers such as Peter Behrens and Walter Gropius. There were, of course, early references in the Australian press to the modern movement. While Andrew McNamara's 2008 essay "The Bauhaus in Australia" begins with a discussion of former Weimar Bauhaus student Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack (arrived 1941), his appointment at Geelong Grammar and the development of "The Bauhaus" 1961 exhibition at Gallery A, Melbourne, there were also a few Australians (and English expatriates) who wrote and lectured on the Bauhaus experiment in Weimar and Dessau before the wave of émigrés began.^{50 51}

The radical architect Henry Pynor wrote on the "aims and ideals of the Bauhaus" in an illustrated feature in the popular magazine *The Home* as early as 1928. Pynor wrote knowledgeably about the *Deutsches Werkbund*, Peter Behrens and focussed on the work of Walter Gropius. "The houses of the Bauhaus masters [...] form one of the finest of the new groups in Europe [...] Altogether [...] these new houses are born out of our conditions, built to our times."⁵²

In Western Australia, the designer (and Communist Party member) John Oldham lectured on the work of Moholy-Nagy in 1936 and drew heavily on the graphic works of the German

⁴⁸ "Art's Part in Industry. First Local Exhibition." *Sydney Morning Herald*. 12 December 1940.

⁴⁹ "Architecture Today and Tomorrow." *Architecture*, April-June 1952, pps.54-55. Further details of this exhibition are included in Chapter 10.

⁵⁰ Andrew McNamara. "The Bauhaus in Australia." *Modern Times*. Melbourne University Press, 2008, pps.2-15.

⁵¹ Hirschfeld-Mack wrote an essay "The Bauhaus. Its beginnings." for *Quadrant*, v.1, no.2, Autumn 1957, pps.81-89.

⁵² Henry Pynor. "A Brief Note on the Aims and Ideals of the Bauhaus." *The Home*. 1 October 1928, pp.48-49.

Bauhaus in his own posters and illustrations.⁵³ Unfortunately, the content of these lectures is unknown. The Englishman R. Haughton (“Jimmy”) James (arrived 1938) also provided lectures and commentary on the Bauhaus for the popular press during his efforts to establish the Design and Industries Association of Australia (DIAA). But these writers and lecturers lacked what only the émigrés could supply, the quality that Conrad Hamann calls “European authenticity”.⁵⁴

Sydney and Melbourne were amongst the chosen Australian destinations for a number of highly trained European architects who immigrated during the continental upheavals of 1937-39 or fled during or after the 1939-45 War. The émigrés began to arrive in the late 1930s where they faced the downturn in the building industry brought on by wartime restrictions. Most of these émigrés came from Central Europe where they held degrees and diplomas from urban universities in Vienna, Berlin, Gdansk, Budapest and other less heralded locations.⁵⁵

Many of these architects had trained under a regime of the New Architecture of the International Style in German, Swiss, Croatian and Austrian schools and had impeccable experience in European modernism under notable instructors. They had “credibility”. As Conrad Hamann has written of the German émigré Frederick Romberg, “[...] in the eye of contemporary students, [Romberg] came with that prized cultural item, *European authenticity*.” “He was watched, Hamann suggests, to see how they (other émigré architects of promise) “... demonstrated the [...] Modern architectural form.”⁵⁶ To what extent, however, was their architecture influential within the development of Australian modernism, particularly the methodology of regional modernism? Within the émigré experiences and training, there was considerable dissonance between the Australian architectural settings.

Many of these émigrés came from densely urban settings such as Berlin or Vienna where medium density housing was commonplace. This had been reflected in their training. In addition to the dilemmas they faced through immigration, they soon found that there was a deep-seated prejudice against medium density housing. As Butler-Bowdon and Pickett have argued, “flats for workers inflamed political and social anxieties”.⁵⁷ Of course, by the late 1920s and 1930s amongst select Sydney and Melbourne urbanites, living in a flat suggested youthful independence but popular distrust persisted. This narrowed the range of opportunities for urban-focussed European architects and some of the recent arrivals either failed or postponed their attempts to practice.

⁵³ Julian Goddard. “John Oldham.” David Bromfield, ed., *Aspects of Perth Modernism 1929-1942*. Centre for Fine Arts, University of Western Australia, 1986, p.17, pps.27-28. Oldham is thought to have drawn on Moholy-Nagy’s *The New Vision*, the first English language survey of the Bauhaus.

⁵⁴ Conrad Hamann. “Frederick Romberg and the problem of European Authenticity.” in Roger Butler, ed. *The Europeans*. National Gallery of Australia, 1997, pps.40-41.

⁵⁵ A preliminary survey has been published by Rebecca Hawcroft. “The Untold Story, Migrants and Modernism.” *Architecture Bulletin*, no.2, 2005, pps.5-7.

⁵⁶ Conrad Hamann. “Frederick Romberg and the problem of European Authenticity.” in Roger Butler, ed. *The Europeans*. National Gallery of Australia, 1997, pps.40-41.

⁵⁷ Popular attitudes are examined in Caroline Butler-Bowdon and Charles Pickett. *Homes in the Sky*. Melbourne University Press, 2007, p.2-8.

There were many other émigré issues to address before a professional practice could be established. There were language, technical terminologies and popular idiom issues to address, then the acceptance of equivalent European training by the respective Boards of Architects or the alternative of sitting the Board of Architects examination. In addition to registration and practice, some émigré were involved in radical politics (communism or other variants of socialism) which may have hindered their assimilation while others (Hugo Stossel) belonged to unfamiliar religious denominations such as “The Christian Community”, a Swiss-based sect associated with the Lutheran church.

Considering the difficulties of professional registration, the impact of cultural shock and the unfamiliar Australian social and economic class structures, a number of highly qualified European modernist architects in Sydney did not attain an active professional practice. As a consequence, many of these architects have not fared well in the major narratives of Sydney modernism. A select few, however, played a role in the Australian development of modernism either through their design work or the philosophical support of the modern movement through lecturing positions within architecture faculties.

The archetype of the successful émigré architect in Sydney is Harry Seidler (arrived 1948) who had the benefit of a generous family stipend, a number of years to perfect his language skills in the UK, Canada and the USA before arriving in Sydney, a willingness to adjust to the Australian cultural setting, plus impeccable academic credentials from the well-known Harvard Graduate School of Design directed by Walter Gropius. Within months of his arrival, Seidler was lecturing to the NSW RAIA on “Aesthetics in Modern Architecture”.⁵⁸ Although quite a different character, Frederick Romberg (arrived 1938) could be the Melbourne equivalent of Seidler, an architect with impeccable training, cosmopolitan experience, committed to a modernist methodology and remarkably adaptable to the Australian cultural setting.

Providing an extreme alternative to Seidler and Romberg, the architect Ferdinand Silberstein-Silvan (arrived 1949) had trained at Prague University in architecture and after 1925, designed a number of early modernist buildings (suggesting the style of Adolf Loos) in Bratislava, Nitra, Martin and other Slovakian towns. His career is essentially unrecorded in Australia while a number of his buildings are on the Slovakian significant buildings register.⁵⁹ He was a member of a prominent Jewish family in Slovakia when the region was occupied by the Germans and he and his family were subject to deportation orders issued at six-monthly intervals (but fortunately waived) until the war’s end in 1945. He and some of his family survived deportation (with name changes to Silvan) and he was finally able to immigrate to Australia in 1948. He never registered as an architect in NSW but worked for the NSW Electricity Commission (in what capacity is unclear). His daughter, Susan Silvan, has prepared a monograph on his life and early works (described by her as European “functionalist”) but his work with the Electricity Commission has not been assessed and his

⁵⁸ *NSW RAIA Chapter Bulletin*. “Address on Aesthetics in Modern Architecture.” vol.6, no.1, 1949, p.1.

⁵⁹ “City of Trenčín Pays Tribute to the Architect F. Silberstein-Silvan by a Monument.” www.trencin.sk/en/index.php?s-cv-contentID=12288&s-cv-embeddedID=24251. (Translation from Croatian) 17 July 2009

impact on modernism in Australia appears negligible.⁶⁰ The personal effects of his experiences are unrecorded but his career offers quite a different pathway to that of Seidler. Silberstein-Silvan died in 1983.

Some émigré architects, on the other hand, moved more readily toward registration and practice. Hugo Stossel (arrived 1938) was born in Hungary and came to Australia with a 1932 diploma of architecture from the Technical University of Vienna. After working with the Department of Works and Housing, Canberra during the 1939-45 War, he took the NSW Board of Architects exam in 1947 and registered the same year. He was 42 years old.⁶¹ In his NSW RAI A registration document, he listed prewar commercial projects in Vienna and Budapest and well as designs (unrealised) for a Soviet Embassy project in Bucharest. The Soviet commission suggests an association with left-wing organisations and/or ideas but this did not seem to affect his employment. He was thoroughly schooled in medium density housing and is best known in Sydney for a number of multi-story units such as St Ursula, Elizabeth Bay (1951). He was later involved in an extensive exercise called the “Rocks Re-development Scheme” with the Gruen-Stossel Partnership.

St Ursula is considered a landmark in Sydney’s medium density housing and Pickett writes, “Stossel was part of that great wave of émigré architects. He designed a lot of apartments around Sydney, but wasn’t particularly well-known, [St Ursula] was his first, and an elegant little building.”

Although Stossel’s residential suburban work is not well known, Phyllis Shillito’s 1954 book *60 Beach and Holiday Homes* includes three works by Stossel along with Ancher, Baldwinson, Seidler.⁶² In these houses, Stossel’s demonstrates his abilities in rectilinear two-level or single-level white-painted, concrete rendered flat-roofed European modernism of the late 1920s and early 1930s that features generous (often full elevation) glazing to conventional rear terraces. The interiors integrate the living and dining areas but do not embrace the more radical open plan. In elevation and plan, they are early Middle-European modernism but aligned to the streetscape in conventional suburbs, the houses have little or no opportunity to response to the Australian setting. Although Stossel actively sought publicity and enjoyed exposure in the professional journals, his work in medium density housing and commercial building overshadowed his residential work. His domestic design, by the mid-1950s, belonged to the early European modernist period. Stossel died in 2002.

Hans Oser (arrival date unknown) registered with the NSW Board of Architects in 1945 although his qualifications and date of arrival from Austria have not come to light.⁶³ A survey of émigré architects suggests that Oser had some connections with Sydney Jewish

⁶⁰ *Wikipedia* citation by Susan Silvan, “Ferdinand Silberstein-Silvan.” sk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kategória:Úmrtia_v_1983. 17 July 2009.

⁶¹ NSW RAI A files, Bibliographical Information, Hugo Stossel. Courtesy of Anne Higham.

⁶² Phyllis Shillito. *60 Beach and Holiday Homes*. Associated General Publications. 1954. Houses designed by some of these émigré domestic architects including Oser (3) and Stossel (4) compared to Seidler (3), Baldwinson (7), Ancher (6) and Bunning and Madden (3).

⁶³ “New Members.” *NSW RAI A Chapter Bulletin*, v.2, no. 4, p.3

community.⁶⁴ He initially practiced as H.P. Oser and Associates. While much of his documented work was carried out in a partnership with the émigré French architect Jean Fombertaux (born in Nice) as Oser and Fombertaux and Associates, a practice specialising in commercial buildings, Oser also featured some of his domestic work in *Architecture*.⁶⁵ A 1954 image in *Architecture* illustrates a house in Wollongong with an asymmetrical floorplan with a ground level thrusting balcony in timber. The house is described as using oiled timber, white trim, yellow railing, yellow-green eave soffits and a sandstone blade wall.⁶⁶ This house is illustrated in Chapter 11 and appeared in the Olympic Arts Festival Exhibition of architecture in Melbourne in 1956.

Oser's work is reproduced in Shillito's *60 Beach and Holiday Houses* with three eclectic domestic commissions demonstrating a fondness for dramatic roof plans ranging from asymmetrical gables to skillions, timber cladding alternating with masonry with timber detailing, roof rafters sailing over patios to provide sheltering enclosures and in one commission, timber pilotis [!]. Most of these houses appear in conventional suburban settings.

Much more work is required on Oser's residential work to make a convincing determination of his influence on the directions in residential modernism in the Sydney region. Shillito's compilation demonstrates that he was a designer with a wide range of architectural forms and interests. Based on his Wollongong House, it would appear that perhaps Sydney influences were attracting Oser as his work resembles the work associated with Derek Wrigley and Geoffrey Twibill (also illustrated in Chapter 11) who were in turn influenced by Baldwinson.

In addition to the Middle Europeans, Sydney also attracted a number of Russian émigrés among them Henry Epstein (usually called Dr Henry Epstein). Henry Epstein was born in Russia (arrived 1939) but educated in architecture in Vienna where he was awarded a doctorate.⁶⁷ Epstein had a wide range of interests and described himself as a painter, industrial designer (notably furniture) and sculptor. His residential work is poorly documented but his Hillman House (1949) is an essay in European modernism of the late 1920s with its steel casement strip windows, white-painted rendered concrete and upper level sunporches. In 1952, demonstrating Epstein's design versatility, he and the sculptor Lyndon Dodswell had won a competition to design what became known as the King George V and VI Memorial fountain and bronze gate, Sandringham Gardens, Hyde Park north. He also contributed to the public realm through his extensions to the Jewish Museum.

Epstein completed the Ashau House, Hunters Hill in 1956, a modernist essay closely resembling in outer form the Baldwinson House, Greenwich (1956) with its upper level cantilevered over a ground floor level on a steep site. Abandoning the European formalism of

⁶⁴ Hawcroft. op. cit., pps.6-7. The author expanded her earlier work in a paper "Migrant Architects practicing Modern Architecture in Sydney 1930-1960." (UN)Loved Modern Conference 2009, Docomomo, Sydney.

⁶⁵ Features in the *Sydney Morning Herald* show an optometry office and photo mural in Martin Place, Sydney, 22 February 1955, and a discussion on trends in the USA, 30 June 1955.

⁶⁶ H.P. Oser. "House in Wollongong." *Architecture*. January/March, 1954, p.18.

⁶⁷ Hawcroft. op. cit., pps.5-7. Epstein told the *Australian Home Beautiful* that his degree was in engineering. *Australian Home Beautiful*. September 1956, pps.17-21.

his Hillman House, the Hunters Hill house had a flat roof sealed with a PVC skin to form what the media called a “lake”. “The House has a lake on its roof” was the title of the illustrated feature on the house in *Australian Home Beautiful* in September 1956.⁶⁸ Broadening his interests further, Epstein became involved in the founding of the Australian Consumers Association (ACA) in 1959, at the time an organisation considered to be “radical”. The ACA remains an active organisation and the publisher of *CHOICE* magazine, a consumer advocacy journal.

Similar to Oser, the eclecticism of Epstein’s work and interests outside of architecture suggest that his influences on the development of modernism in Sydney should be considered marginal. His residential design (as far as it is known) is intriguing when seen individually, but does not coalesce into a clear statement of modernism or contribute to the development of a regional modernism.

While born in China into the family of a prominent Prussian jurist, Frederick Romberg (arrived 1938) trained in architecture at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich where he was directly exposed to the work of major European modernists such as his lecturer Otto Salvisberg, and Le Corbusier and Berthold Lubetkin through university study tours.⁶⁹ Coming to maturity during the Weimar Period, like many other German émigrés, Romberg was also attracted to the more radical elements of German socialism but this seemed to have little effect on his career.

As Edquist discusses in her essay “The Architecture of Migration: Frederick Romberg 1938-1975”, the architect was trained in the development and planning of medium density European housing in a Swiss-influenced International Style. He arrived in Melbourne equipped with the elements of what Edquist calls the “modern movement”, “ribbon windows, cantilevers, pilotis, roof gardens, open plan and the new urban typologies like the apartment block”.⁷⁰ Romberg, 25 years old at the time of his arrival, took up employment at Stephenson & Turner in 1938 while Arthur Baldwinson was associated with the firm. From October 1938 to December 1939, he and Baldwinson both played a role in the New Zealand Centennial Exhibition (1939-40). The placement with Stephenson and Turner was ideal and Romberg could put his European training to use while adapting to the Australian cultural setting. He was able to achieve registration with the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects by 1940 and gain residency status by 1944.⁷¹

Medium density housing brought him considerable media attention during his short-lived partnership (1939-45) with fellow Stephenson and Turner architect Mary (Molly) Turner Shaw. Their four-storey Newburn Flats (1939), Melbourne drew the attention of Sydney architect John D. Moore as early as 1941 in a feature arguing for a regional methodology for modern architecture in Australia.⁷² The Glenunga Flats (1940), Armadale was also chosen by

⁶⁸ “The House has a lake on its roof.” *Australian Home Beautiful*. September 1956. pps.17-21.

⁶⁹ This survey of Romberg’s career draws on Harriet Edquist, ed. *The Architecture of Migration*. 1939-1975. RMIT University Press, 2000.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p.17

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p.17.

⁷² John D. Moore. “Form.” *Art in Australia*. 1 March 1941, p.73.

Baldwinson and his wife as a residence when he took on his role as architect for the Department of Aircraft Production (DAP), Fishermen's Bend. Illustrating the visibility of Romberg within Baldwinson's frame of reference, the architect wrote to John Mockridge in 1952 about a forthcoming *British House & Gardens* issue featuring Australian flats, "Regarding flats in Sydney, I am afraid that I do not know of anything anywhere near up to the standard of Grounds and Romberg, except a project by Seidler, but it has not yet been built."⁷³

It was Romberg and Shaw's residential work that resonated within the development of what was to become Baldwinson's regional modernism. Their later wartime designs for residential projects for the Pettifer House project (1943), East Ivanhoe and the Miller & Short House (1945), Upwey (illustrated in Chapter 4) were executed while Baldwinson was resident in Melbourne giving the architect opportunities to study their cantilevered concrete balconies, timbered pergolas, extensive glazing, site-sensitive compositions on difficult sites and use of random rubble fieldstone that later found their way into Sydney's regional modernist adaptations. As Edquist concludes in her essay, "Romberg seemed to believe in and hold an internal image secured [...] by his European milieu, [...] but it changed with the years and the accommodation to Australia...".⁷⁴ It was Romberg's "accommodation" of European modernism that assisted the development of Baldwinson's place-centred regional modernism.

It is clear that Romberg's contribution to modernism, particularly in Melbourne, was significant given his work with the innovative Stephenson and Turner organisation, the relatively high media attention that the Romberg and Shaw partnership received, his later partnership with Roy Grounds and Robin Boyd and finally, his teaching roles within the Melbourne Technical College and later, the University of Melbourne.

Frederick Janeba was an Austrian (arrived 1939) who immigrated to Australia with the assistance of the Victorian Refugee Council. He trained in the European style of modernism working under Peter Behrens at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts.⁷⁵ While the early 20th century work of the senior German architect Peter Behrens (teacher of Gropius, Mies, Le Corbusier) seems to have influenced Janeba's earliest Melbourne work such as the Toorak House (1939) illustrated in Chapter 4, Janeba quickly began to shape his work into a modernism quite unlike the international style that had informed his earlier studies. Within four years Janeba had designed the Wrigley House (1943), Warrandyte where he adapted the geometry of the international movement into the Australian bushland by terracing two levels of random rubble sandstone walls (obtained from the site) down a sloping site under a skillion roof that sheltered unobstructed glazing lifting to the views. In 1948, he developed his own two-level house (illustrated in chapter 4) nearby. This house was on sloping bushland where he developed an L-plan that took advantage of the site, albeit on a more

⁷³ Arthur Baldwinson to John Mockridge, re: *British House & Gardens*, 10 January 1952. Personal Correspondence. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792.

⁷⁴ Edquist, op. cit., p.64

⁷⁵ Hugh O'Neil. "On File. Frederick Alois Janeba.: *Transition*. 36/37, 1991, pps. 136-147.

modest scale than his earlier Australian work.⁷⁶ The Janeba House (1948) was clad in vertical tongue-and-groove weatherboard.

Janeba's work in Melbourne is significant for two reasons: first, as Evans has pointed out, the Warrandyte area where the architect lived and worked contained "some of the nation Australia's most significant artists and intellectuals" where there was "a shared commitment to a vision of living harmoniously with and in the native landscape".⁷⁷ Anne Brennan has also found that Janeba moved amongst the Victorian émigré community of Yosl Bergner, Inge King and Danila Vassilieff, a group of European artists committed to modernist forms of expression.⁷⁸ Secondly, Janeba took a position at the University of Melbourne after 1947 where he was in a position to directly influence the postwar generation of architects. He remained in this position for 16 years.⁷⁹ He returned to Austria to take up a teaching position in 1967 and died in 1983.

MODERNISM IN SYDNEY

Sydney's engagement with modernism began in the late 1920s, stimulated by European (and occasionally North American) travel, international touring exhibitions and locally organised expositions by early modernist groups such as MARS. With the arrival of the European émigrés in Melbourne and Sydney in the later 1930s to supplement the Sydney architectural community, there were enough practitioners to "profess" as well as practise modernist architecture. This group of modernists formed an interactive community of architects who shared a descriptive vocabulary and beliefs through their professional organisations, journals and political organisations.⁸⁰

While modernism's architectural ideology has many facets, there are consensus elements such as the necessity of economic housing, the rejection of historicism, the commonly held importance of good design and an awareness of the social and cultural dynamics of residential architecture. The "creation myth" of European modernism also fosters a sense of a shared past.⁸¹ A "community" is defined as an interactive group commonly organized around shared values. Within early Australian modernism by the early 1940, there was more than enough cohesiveness to allow this community to survive the disruptions of the 1939-45 War and re-emerge in the postwar period with renewed vigor and a wide range of interpretations of modernist architecture.

⁷⁶ "Austria in Australia." *Australian Home Beautiful*, December 1949, pps.23-25, 55. Also Anne Brennan. "A Philosophical Approach to Design. Gerhard Herbst and Fritz Janeba." in Roger Butler, ed. *The Europeans*. National Gallery of Australia, 1997, pps.38-58.

⁷⁷ Doug Evans. op. cit., pps.5-7

⁷⁸ Anne Brennan. "A Philosophical Approach to Design. Gerhard Herbst and Fritz Janeba." in Roger Butler, ed. *The Europeans*. National Gallery of Australia, 1997, pps.38-58.

⁷⁹ Hugh O'Neil. op. cit., p.146.

⁸⁰ Anderson writes of the "imagined community" that thrives based on the assumption that a shared language indicates a "particular solidarity". Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities*. Verso, revised edition, 1991, p.133.

⁸¹ The scholar Colin St John Wilson argues that the birth of the New Architecture initiated a "Resistance" Movement amongst some early modernist practitioners (notably the German architect Hugo Haering) who preferred "...to examine things and allow them to discover their own forms." *The Other Tradition of Modern Architecture. The Uncompleted Project*. Academy Editions, 1995, pps.22-43.

On Baldwinson's return to Australia in 1937, the "Moderne" was seen as one of the more progressive Sydney styles. Conrad Hamann has observed that, "Australian modernism, based as it was in those earlier forms [i.e. the Moderne style of the 1920s] was, in the international sense, obsolete as soon as it began."⁸² As in Melbourne, the Sydney Moderne style was characterised by forms inspired by the now-familiar streamlining vocabulary with rounded corners and porthole windows, embellished with shallow-relief geometric ornament.

Winsome Hall, an early graduate from the University of Sydney's architecture programme produced early work in the Moderne style. Hall's subsequent career continued her early modernist trend when in association with Eric Andrew; they were joint Sulman Award winners for their Manly Surf Pavilion (illustrated in Chapter 4) in 1939 where their commitment to Moderne massing and materials is clear.⁸³ The Manly Surf Pavilion (illustrated in Chapter 4) had been designed for a competition in 1936 and is indicative of the international leanings of the era.

On the basis of his ANZAC War Memorial in Hyde Park, Sydney, C. Bruce Dellit is also considered one of Sydney's more progressive Moderne practitioners. His later work includes theatres, banks and hotels. Like Raymond McGrath, he studied with Leslie Wilkinson at the University of Sydney. Dellit's residential work is typically described as "Mediterranean" in the manner of his teacher Wilkinson and displays little or no interest in modernism.

It is not possible to survey this early modernist era without reference to Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin's speculative subdivision for the Greater Sydney Development Association for the Castle Cove and Castlecrag area. But the development seems to have had very little impact on Sydney's residential architecture practice and only 19 houses had been built to the Griffin's designs by 1932. The surprisingly ornamental Griffin houses are eccentric by Moderne standards and while their concrete construction included some modernist elements such as flat roofs, built-in storage, "scientific" kitchens and sensitive site planning, their architectural legacy in Sydney is meagre.⁸⁴ The ponderous masonry construction is at odds with the earliest modernist expressions in Sydney although the Castlecrag houses were well sited in the rugged harbour landscape.

The 1936 Wydefel Gardens (illustrated in Chapter 4), Potts Point, a medium density housing design by the Swedenborgist John Brogan is a key feature in the narrative of the earliest notions of modernist architectural design in NSW. Brogan's foray into modernism was transitory, however, and supported (and perhaps encouraged) by his patron W.A. Crowle. Although considered a seminal work in the development of modernism; when compared to later works of the 1930s, Brogan's Wydefel Gardens appear distinctly Moderne.

⁸² Conrad Hamann. "Roy Grounds, Frederick Romberg and Robin Boyd." *Architects of Australia*. Howard Tanner, editor. MacMillan, 1982, p.129.

⁸³ Bronwyn Hanna. *Absence and Presence. A Historiography of Early Women Architects in NSW*. PhD Thesis. Faculty of the Built Environment, UNSW, 1999.

⁸⁴ Reviewed in detail in Anne Watson, ed. *Beyond Architecture: Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin*. Powerhouse Publishing, 1998.

The key figures of the first generation of young committed modernists in Sydney with direct experience in British and European modernism in the 1930s include Gerard (G.H.B.) McDonell, Sydney Ancher, Morton Herman (whose later career shifted to architectural history) and Walter Bunning. With the exception of Ancher, all were members of the MARS group.

At the same time, the profession was changing and the NSW RAIA Sulman Award for residential architecture was providing a measure of the acceptance of modernism in Sydney. This trend toward favouring modernist work for the Sulman Award had begun with the 1939 award to Eric Andrew and Winsome Hall for the Manly Surf Pavilion and continued with awards to McDonell in 1940 and Sydney Ancher's Poyntzfield in 1945. The MARS member Morton Herman, the chair of the Sulman Committee for some years, said of his position within the NSW RAIA that the leadership role "allowed me to achieve my ambition to push along the movement of modern architecture".⁸⁵ And in terms of the Sulman Award, a "tilt" toward modernism was accomplished.

The 1940 Sulman Award winner McDonell studied architecture at the University of Sydney with Leslie Wilkinson and tutor John D. Moore, graduating in 1932. He then left for overseas and returned to establish a practice in mid-1930s.⁸⁶ When Baldwinson, Bunning and others organised the MARS group in Sydney, McDonell was amongst its first members. He is best recalled during this era for his 1940 Sulman Award for his residence at 67 Elgin Street, Gordon.⁸⁷ The house (illustrated in Chapter 4), built for his family, receives high praise from Apperly who welcomes it (and Baldwinson's 1938 Collins House) as amongst Sydney's earliest manifestations of modernism. "... [I]f one is looking for a building which is the product of a calm and thorough application of rational thought processes to the problem at hand and which contains no stylistic irrelevancies whatsoever, then this building was of the greatest significance in the evolution of the Sydney house...".⁸⁸ Reviewed with enthusiasm by Walter Bunning in *The Home*, he saw the McDonell House was the equivalent of "the notable modern houses of Europe".⁸⁹ It was later reproduced in Beiers's 1948 survey of much of Australia's domestic modernism, *Houses of Australia*. Inexplicably, however, McDonell's interest in modernism seems to have waned quickly and his later work becomes less visible.

Walter Bunning was the exemplary Sydney modernist as Margalit has demonstrated in his thesis.⁹⁰ Bunning became the first president of the Sydney MARS group in 1939 when he returned from a scholarship-sponsored travel through Britain and Europe from 1937-39.⁹¹

⁸⁵ "Interview with Morton Herman." Hazel de Berg. Oral TRC1/566, Oral History and Folklore. National Library of Australia, 1972.

⁸⁶ Andrew Metcalf. "The McDonell House." *Architecture in Transition. The Sulman Award 1932-1996*. Historic Houses Trust of NSW, 1997, p.72.

⁸⁷ The jury included Morton Herman, S.G. Thorp, J.D. Moore, Henry Pynor, McDonell (retired for deliberation), Fred Medworth, Will Ashton and R. Haughton James. Metcalf, *ibid.*, p.72.

⁸⁸ Apperly, *op. cit.*, p.186-187.

⁸⁹ Walter Bunning. *The Home*. 1 August 1941, p.26.

⁹⁰ Harry Margalit. "Reasoning To Believe: Aspects of Modernity in Sydney Architecture and Planning 1900-1960." PhD Thesis. Power Department of Fine Arts, Sydney University, 1997, p.123.

⁹¹ MARS only lasted long enough for two presidents.

Bunning, however, makes his greatest contribution to the Sydney modernist movement as a writer rather than as a designer. He enjoyed social prominence and close associations with Sydney Ure Smith's stable of magazines, *The Home* and *Art in Australia* and provided them with copy (anonymous as well as signed) through the late 1930s and early 1940s.

Margalit identifies the written support that Bunning lent to Baldwinson's regionalist elements in his Collins and Kingsford Smith houses of the late 1930s by his description of the Kingsford Smith house in terms that "substantiate a variant of bush mythology but [...] indicate the origins of that mythology in an easy recognition of the particular characteristics of the Australian environment. Bunning's reaction [...] reveals this grounding of beauty on a bedrock of nationalist sentiment for the place."⁹²

In the immediate period before the outbreak of the 1939-45 War, Bunning was an articulate supporter of European modernism. His best-known work remains the wartime publication *Homes in the Sun. Past, Present, and Future of Australian Housing*, published by W.J. Nesbitt in 1945. *Homes in the Sun* features the modernist vision of a post-war Australia where medium density flats sit amongst parkland, their outlooks controlled by careful consideration of site, landscape architecture and solar-based planning. The book illustrates Romberg and Shaw's 1941 Newburn flats, Melbourne as examples of progressive design.⁹³

The pre-eminent status of the Sydney modernist Sydney Ancher has been well established for several decades. While all of the previously identified architects played significant roles in the development of Sydney's modernist domestic architecture, Sydney Ancher is consistently identified as one of the most influential modernists of the mid-20th century.⁹⁴ His RAI Gold Medal citation reads "One of the Australian pioneers of the Modern Movement. [...] His work forged a vital link between Australian tradition and 20th century architecture [...]. The work between 1945 to 1956 is the most influential of any architecture in Sydney. His houses are classics of the period."⁹⁵

Ancher qualified as an architect in 1929 at Sydney Technical College and was awarded the NSW Board of Architects travelling scholarship in 1930 and left immediately for England. He initially worked for the British modernist Joseph Emberton whose Royal Corinthian Yacht Club (1930) was one of the celebrated buildings of the 1930s. He travelled widely and saw the *Weissenhofsiedlung* in Stuttgart and the work of Gropius, Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier. After five years in Britain and Europe he returned home.⁹⁶ Ancher was captivated by the work of Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier but it wasn't until after 1945 that he could put the principles to work. Illustrating the NSW acceptance of modernism at the highest professional level, his house, Poyntzfield, was awarded a NSW RAI Sulman Award in 1945.

⁹² Margalit. op. cit., p.123.

⁹³ Walter Bunning. *Homes in the Sun*. W.J. Nesbitt, 1945, p.76.

⁹⁴ David Saunders and Catherine Burke. *Ancher Mortlock Murray and Woolley. Sydney Architects 1946-1976*. Power Institute of Fine Arts, 1976.

⁹⁵ Stuart Murray. "Sydney Ancher" Obituary. *Architecture Australia*, February/March 1980, p.68.

⁹⁶ Richard E. Apperly and Peter Reynolds, "Sydney Edward Cambrian Ancher (1904 - 1979)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Online Edition. 12 August 2007.

Ancher eventually published a series of essays in *Architecture* in the late 1930s. One of his essays, “The Evolution of Modern Architecture” summarised his position on modernism in 1939.⁹⁷ Similar to many of the early writers on modernism in Australia, Ancher evoked “scientific” principles associated with modernism. This reflected his attraction to the German school of architectural modernism represented by the Bauhaus. “It might be asked why the necessity for a new aesthetic which implies a new philosophy, should arise from the needs of the day. The answer is that it arises from a fundamental historical process, the application of science to life.” These views, forcefully expressed in the pages of *Architecture*, suggest the tone and tenor of the Seidler position on International Modernism articulated in 1948-49.

Although Moore belonged to an earlier generation of Australians who had fought in the 1914-18 War, he was one of the most active public defenders of modernism. As a writer and senior office-holder in the NSW RAIA, he was in a position to promote and defend the work of the new generation of modernists. His residential work displays few characteristics of modernist design principles and he has been ignored as an early modernist. His role in MARS, the public defence of modernism within the NSW RAIA and his writings, however, reveal an architect committed to modernist ideas.

Writing while Australia was in the grip of the war Moore’s 1944 book *Home Again* addressed the potential returning defence force and summarised his view of modernism.⁹⁸ “What we now call the modern movement started,” he wrote, “slowly at first, developing greater speed after the Great War. It is temporarily arrested now by the World War as far as its actual building activities are concerned, but it is tremendously revitalised and stimulated in its spirit by the enormous urge of man to plan a better world to live in.” Although a committed modernist, Moore offered little or no support to International Modernism and urged an Australian response to the movement that suggested what he called a “national architecture”.

When Baldwinson moved to Sydney in the later 1930s to begin his private practice, he immediately immersed himself in this community of modernist architects and reformers including McDonell, Ancher, Moore, Morton Herman and Bunning. Within months of his arrival, these architects (with the exception of Ancher) began to coalesce around the MARS group and continue their struggle to establish modernist architecture in the region.

Modernism and Regionalism

The transition from the earlier European Moderne forms and the émigré examples of International Modernism in Sydney and Melbourne began to appear in regionalist interpretations in the 1930s. Goad points out that Robin Boyd in his 1947 study *Victorian Modern* had identified the thread in 1930s Australian modernism that sought to integrate international and local architectural design into residential architecture that was “... responding creatively to site and climate”.⁹⁹ Goad considers that this 1930s and 1940s

⁹⁷ Sydney Ancher. “The Evolution of Modern Architecture.” *Architecture*, 1 December 1939, pps.247-249 and subsequent issues.

⁹⁸ John D. Moore. *Home Again*. Ure Smith, 1944, pps.34-35.

⁹⁹ Philip Goad. “The Modern House in Melbourne.” PhD Thesis, Melbourne University. 1992. pps.1/p.39.

movement could be found in Sydney and Melbourne where these modernist "...houses are the Australian response to a world-wide shift [...] toward a regionalised modern house opposed to the aesthetic proscriptions of the International Style."¹⁰⁰

Goad considers Boyd's writings as amongst the first to formally identify the regional tendencies in Australian domestic architecture. Boyd, in his flamboyant manner, writes of the tensions between "functionalists" (International Modernists) and "organicists (regional translators of modernism) as a "great stimulus to the future development of architecture."¹⁰¹ In a later edition of *Australia's Home*, he (with a 1948 Seidler essay attacking regionalism ringing in his ears) adjusts his earlier judgements and described the regionalist methodology as "sympathetic with and subservient to [Seidler's precise expression] the landscape" while the work of the "functionalists" was "defiant, exhilarating, proud."¹⁰²

When the regionalist debate began to surface in Australia in the 1940s, the international literature on regional values in architecture was well developed.¹⁰³ Lewis Mumford had foreshadowed the debate in his *Culture of Cities* in 1938 stating "The grasp of the region as a dynamic social reality is a first step toward a constructive policy of planning, housing and urban renewal [...]. One may define a regional approach by working upward from the smallest unit of human habitation or by working downward mainly in terms of land mass, climate and physical interactions. [...]"¹⁰⁴

In 1940, J.M. Richards, the British author of *An Introduction to Modern Architecture*, a text used at Sydney University's Faculty of Architecture, was equally supportive of a regionalist methodology for modern architecture. Richards wrote, "The new architecture, in that it is a way of approaching architectural problems based on reason instead of on sentiment, is not concerned with frontiers. It has grown simultaneously in many different countries [...] and a modern hospital might be interchangeable with one in Belgium, Australia or California. The kind of civilisation that has produced modern architecture, as well as the social needs that provide the occasion for it, is much the same [...] but countries also have their own different temperaments and ideals and different climates, habits and raw materials. They also have a past [...]"¹⁰⁵ Summarising the later views of Sydney's John D. Moore, Richards wrote, "This process of re-nationalization of a common architectural idiom is not in any case a new one. [...]" "[T]he modern equivalent of this kind of development should be described as regionalism rather than nationalism..."¹⁰⁶

Mumford re-invigorated the topic of regionally based domestic architecture in the English language press in a "Sky Line" column in the *New Yorker* in October 11, 1947. Attacking International Modernism in the 1947 *New Yorker*, he described the regional mode of

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p.1/p.39.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, p.5/68, citing Robin Boyd. *Australia's Home*. 1952 edition, p.256.

¹⁰² Robin Boyd. *Australia's Home*. Melbourne University Press, 1961 edition, p.179.

¹⁰³ Vincent Canizaro, editor. *Architectural Regionalism. Collected Writings on Place, Identity, Modernity and Tradition*. Princeton Architectural Press, 2007.

¹⁰⁴ Lewis Mumford. *The Culture of Cities*, Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich, 1938. Harcourt Brace and Company facsimile, 1970, pps.304, 310.

¹⁰⁵ J.M. Richards. *An Introduction of Modern Architecture*. Pelican, 1940 edition, p.92.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, pps.79-80.

architecture [specifically the San Francisco Bay area practitioners] as a “...native and humane form of modernism [...] and [...] far more truly an international style than the international style of the 1930’s because it permits regional variations.” [...] He suggested, “... the change that is now going on in both Europe and America means only that modern architecture is past its adolescent period, with its quixotic purities, its awkward self-consciousness, its assertive dogmatism.”¹⁰⁷

Canizaro’s introduction to the international essays of his recent *Architectural Regionalism* anthology offers expanded contemporary definitions for regionalism developed in the debates that followed the original controversy stirred by Mumford’s and Richards’ observations. Canizaro insists, “Regionalism is the pre-eminent discourse in architecture that focuses on design in terms of particularity and locale. It suggests that local experience [...] should serve as the basis for architectural design. [...] It must foster connectedness to that place and should be a response to the needs of local life, not in spite of global concerns and possibilities but in order to take better advantage of them. [...] It should open up possibilities for understanding where and with whom one lives. It should encourage awareness of local climate and the changing of seasons. [...]”¹⁰⁸

Kenneth Frampton, another prominent theorist of regionalism reprinted in *Architectural Regionalism*, describes the development of site-specific design as a struggle between “typology” and “topography”. Typology, for Frampton, is the building form, the product of systems of measurement and cultural practices. “Topography,” he writes, “is unequivocally site-specific. It is, so to speak, the concrete appearance of rootedness itself. Nature, even the manipulated man-made nature, is the precondition for its being.”¹⁰⁹

In summarising the early decades of modernism in Australia, Goad wrote “The idea of a regional modern architecture was embraced across Australia in the late 1940s and early 1950s”. While he assigns some of the impetus for the earliest argument for a “regionally appropriate” domestic architecture to Boyd’s *Victorian Modern*, Goad suggests that the “circumstantial adoption of local materials [...] in a climate of postwar austerity encouraged an unpretentious often carpenter-like response to the design of the house.”^{110 111}

Doug Evans, also asserting earlier dates for regionalist impulses, reminds us that “a vigorous school of regional-modernist architecture emerged during the decades of the 1930’s and 1940’s” and the practitioners sought to identify the elements that nurtured a regional architectural response in Victoria. In particular, Evans notes the cohesive place-centred community where regional modernism developed, in particular, Melbourne’s northeast

¹⁰⁷ Lewis Mumford. “Sky Line.” *The New Yorker*, 11 October 1947, p.104.

¹⁰⁸ Vincent Canizaro. Introduction to *Architectural Regionalism*, Princeton Architectural Press, 2007, p.12.

¹⁰⁹ Kenneth Frampton. “Ten Points on an Architecture of Regionalism. A provisional Polemic.” In Vincent Canizaro, editor. *Architectural Regionalism*, Princeton Architectural Press, 2007, pps.375-385.

¹¹⁰ Robin Boyd. *Victorian Modern*. Victorian Architectural Students Society, Melbourne, 1947, p.67. “... the Victorian house has developed with something inherited from a century of Victorian living something borrowed from the more sophisticated experience of California and a great deal learnt from the world-wide modern movement...”

¹¹¹ Philip Goad. “Toward a New International? Australian Houses 1950-1965.” Papers, 16th Annual Conference. SAHANZ, Launceston and Hobart, 1999, p.81.

suburbs where dramatic topography and native bushland was abundant. These relatively undeveloped areas attracted what Evans describes as “some of the nation Australia’s most significant artists and intellectuals” where there was “a shared commitment to a vision of living harmoniously with and in the native landscape”.¹¹² These themes emerge in Baldwinson’s “artists houses” series begun in the postwar period.

In her essay on regionalism in Victoria, Winsome Callister notes that some of the singular elements of the “regional” house were the integration of outdoor areas such as balconies, terraces and patios within the functional floorplan of the house. The framing of views, whether near or distant, was also a significant element in site planning.¹¹³ Callister specifically cites the Round House, Frankston (1953) of Grounds and Janeba’s Warrandyte House where the house makes little or no contribution to the streetscape, focussing its fenestration on bushland views.

One of the earlier regionalist responses came from Melbourne-trained architect Best Overend who had travelled in Britain from 1931-1933.¹¹⁴ After Overend’s return to Melbourne in 1933, he joined the practice of Taylor and Soilleux to form H. Vivian Taylor, Soilleux and Overend. When Overend, however, was in private practice, a 1939 commission for the Koornong School in the Melbourne suburb of Warrandyte provided an early essay in Victorian regional architecture in its placement in the landscape and the use of stone and timber. The commission came from J.C. (Clive) and Janet Nield for an alternative boarding school in rugged bushland near the Yarra River.^{115 116} It was an early essay in large scale regional architectural planning. Significantly, Best worked with Janeba who prepared working drawings for the school.¹¹⁷

In the 1930s, Grounds also developed what Evans describes as a regionalist style. His “... residential designs in a similar idiom from around this time influenced other Melbourne architects to experiment in a similar idiom, most notably Norman Seabrook and Best Overend.” He notes “Boyd was a frequent visitor to Grounds’ own residence at Mount Eliza (1937) as were many later students of Grounds. This [Mt Eliza House] was executed in a woody regionalist style [...] as were several other Grounds residential commissions at the time including Lyncroft (1934) at Shoreham and Portland Lodge, the first Henty residence in Frankston (1933-4).”¹¹⁸

¹¹² Doug Evans. op. cit., pps.5-7.

¹¹³ Winsome Callister. “The Response to the City. Melbourne Regionalism of the 1950s and 1960s.” *Transition*, Winter 1989, pps.33-44.

¹¹⁴ This career summary relies on Philip Goad. “Best Overend. Pioneer Modernist in Melbourne.” *Fabrications*. 6:June 1995, pps.101-124.

¹¹⁵ J.C. Nield is the father of Sydney architect, Lawrence Nield of Bligh Volker Nield.

¹¹⁶ 1999 Memoir from former student Douglas Probert regarding Koornong, [www.cs.mu.oz.au/~lee/era/KoornongX recollections.txt](http://www.cs.mu.oz.au/~lee/era/KoornongX%20recollections.txt). 3 Jan. 2006.

¹¹⁷ Hugh O’Neill. “On File. Frederick Alois Janeba.” *Transition*, v.36/37: 1991, pps.136-147.

¹¹⁸ Doug Evans, op.cit., p.7.

Hamann states that Grounds wanted to “...state the intangible by capturing either the spirit of a surrounding landscape, or the pattern of a client’s living habits”.¹¹⁹ He cites the Watts House, Toorak (1935) where his plan adjusts itself to a mature tree on the allotment. Grounds, whose thoughts on domestic architecture were captured in a published debate about the current state of architecture in 1952, revealed himself as a humanist who stood in direct opposition to a “scientific” or functionalist position in architecture.¹²⁰ “We have been so concentrating ourselves on exemplifying science that we have forgotten about the fact that we deal with human beings. The bloke that invented [...] [...]the phrase that a ‘house is a machine for living in...’] does not believe it for a minute.” Grounds continued in this vein, “...[W]e should build buildings, not for the effects of science, but that we should build buildings sheerly [sic] because they are very beautiful things to look at and to live in...”.¹²¹

Frederick Romberg also developed a significant regional response to Melbourne modernism. Harriet Edquist’s essay on the work of Romberg in *The Architecture of Migration* details his conversion from European modernist architecture in the 1930s into an Australian regionalist. A highly adaptable European who quickly acclimatised to the Australian setting by embracing Australian artists and local culture, “The underlying concern [of Romberg],” Edquist writes, “was to produce an architecture suitable to Australia and local conditions, an architecture of place.”¹²²

Many of Sydney’s earliest modernist practitioners architects also established positions (pro or con) on regionalist architecture through their writings, commissions and public addresses. During the post-war period, this included Baldwinson, Ancher, Moore, Bunning and Seidler.¹²³ McDonell appears to have left his aesthetic position un-stated. Baldwinson and Moore took a regionalist position while Bunning was largely drawn to the science of construction and prefabrication. Ancher and later, Seidler gave strong support to a “scientific” or International Modernist approach to design.

Moore, an early employer of Ancher, expressed strongly held regionalist views as early as 1941, some years before Boyd’s *Victoria Modern*. Moore was one of the most activist regional modernists within the NSW RAIA (where he also held a number of important committee positions). In 1941 he wrote in *Art in Australia* that architects must “... [recognise] the fundamental qualities of our landscape and climate and putting aside principles of good architecture overseas, [...] apply the same principles to the solution of our

¹¹⁹ Conrad Hamann. “Grounds, Romberg and Boyd.” in Howard Tanner, ed. *Architects of Australia*. MacMillan, 1982, p.130.

¹²⁰ Roy Grounds. “A three-sided debate. Are we at the beginning, peak or end of an architectural era?” *Architecture and Arts*. Vol.1, 1952. Reproduced in Ann Stephens, et al. op. cit., pps.863-872. See also an abstract of a talk given by Roy Grounds to the NSW RAIA in 1952 that addresses these same ideas. “The Houses we live in.” *Chapter Bulletin*, NW RAIA, August 1952, pps.4-5.

¹²¹ *ibid.*, p.864.

¹²² Harriet Edquist, ed. *Frederick Romberg. The Architecture of Migration 1938-1975*. RMIT University Press, 2000, p.15.

¹²³ See the surveys by D.L. Johnson. *Australian Architecture 1901-51. Sources of Modernism*. University of Sydney Press, 1980 and George Beiers. *Houses of Australia. A Survey of Domestic Architecture*. Ure Smith, 1948 and Philip Goad. “Melbourne, Harry Seidler and the East Coast International Style.” in “The Modern House in Melbourne.” PhD Thesis, Melbourne University. 1992. pps.5/63-5/81.

building problems. [...] It is most important that a country's peculiar pattern of life be preserved and fostered and developed".¹²⁴

He returned to this topic in his 1944 book, *Home Again*.¹²⁵ His view of modernism was directed toward regional solutions. Prefiguring the contemporary regionalist positions of Canizaro and Frampton, Moore held that the adoption of International Modernism principles without regional considerations was inappropriate. "[T]o transplant the appearance of such a [flat-roofed and box-formed] building to some other and different country and people is false and cannot truly be called modern." He spoke out strongly against an ill-considered use of the international modernist style in Australia concluding that "I believe we should design and build simply and faithfully, keeping to the problem in hand and working strictly within its limits; using the large areas of glass, not because they are an overseas feature, but strictly to satisfy a distinct want...". As an early proponent of a regional response, he urged that the first principle of building design should "take due regard and notice of the geographical nature of the building site [...]."

His writings parallels Mumford's positions on regionalism arguing "that local experience, [...] should serve as the basis for architectural design. [...] It must foster connectedness to that place and should be a response to the needs of local life, not in spite of global concerns and possibilities but in order to take better advantage of them. [...] It should open up possibilities for understanding where and with whom one lives. It should encourage awareness of local climate and the changing of seasons. [...]."¹²⁶

Baldwinson's support for a regionalist position for domestic architecture appears in his typescript of a 1947 lecture to the Sydney Contemporary Art Society (CAS). He states categorically that what he calls the New Architecture must "...adapt [the] building to its site, climate and environment. It is often impossible to repeat a design successfully on a different site [...]."¹²⁷ Baldwinson's consistent use of this site specific "process" is an intrinsic part of the architectural methodology of regionalism.¹²⁸ This illustrates something of Frampton's proposed dialectic between typology and topography.¹²⁹

While discussed in detail in Chapter 9, Baldwinson's design project for the William Dobell residence and studio in Eastview Road, Church Point best illustrates his careful regionalist methodology. The job file's early sketches and designs for the Dobell House project show a difficult site on a steep and rocky slope. The Dobell project began with site visits, even a wind rose study suggesting Baldwinson's close observation of the site followed by some biro sketches on tracing paper.¹³⁰ Baldwinson's methodology was a careful study of the

¹²⁴ John D. Moore. "Form." *Art in Australia*, 1 March 1941, pps.69-73.

¹²⁵ John D. Moore. *Home Again*. Ure Smith, 1944.

¹²⁶ Vincent Canizaro. Introduction to *Architectural Regionalism*, Princeton Architectural Press, 2007, p.12.

¹²⁷ "Contemporary Trends in Architecture." Lecture to the Contemporary Art Society, Discussion Evening, 21 November 1947. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792.

¹²⁸ Frampton describes the development of regional design as a process. Kenneth Frampton. "Ten Points on an Architecture of Regionalism. A provisional Polemic." In Vincent Canizaro, ed. *Architectural Regionalism*, Princeton Architectural Press, 2007, pps.375-385.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

¹³⁰ Job File. 1948. William Dobell. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792.

topography of the site taking the surveyor's levels and plotting out the terrain, wind direction, an earlier stone wall, trees and the prominent views of the place. Goad recognises the echoes of Baldwinson's British modernist experience and concludes, "these [Baldwinson works] are not the pristine cubes of the East Coast work of Gropius and Breuer. Baldwinson's houses are skilful regional interpretations, transplanting a humanised modernism already accomplished after being transplanted from Germany to England."¹³¹

Regionalism, however, had its Australian opponents. When Sydney Ancher returned from Europe in 1936, he emerged as one of the more doctrinaire modernists through a series of essays published in *Architecture*. These essays, "Whither Architecture?" and "The Evolution of Modern Architecture" set out his firmly expressed views on International Modernism.¹³² As one of the earliest architects writing on theories of modernism in Australia, Ancher evoked the "scientific" principles associated with modernism.¹³³ This reflected his attraction to the German school of modernist architecture represented by the Bauhaus or what Ancher called German architecture. Science, for Ancher, meant "system".

Ancher insisted that "[t]he basis of the modern aesthetic is knowledge and system, from which spring all its characteristics of clarity and exactness and its refusal to be content with what is only approximate or ill-defined." The contemporary form of modernist architecture is unprecedented, Ancher's essay asserted. "[I]t is not due solely to any particular aesthetic preference," he wrote, "but equally to their being the logical result of a different structural technique [...]. The unique qualities pose new problems for contemporary architecture and some of the answers are to be found in the range of new building materials such as glass, concrete and steel." These "systems", he argued, should have universal applications.

Ancher's coincidental ally, the émigré Seidler, sensitive to the Australian regional impulses (and perhaps the leadership of regionalist John D. Moore within the NSW RAIA), had troubled views of regional themes in materials, siting and non-standardised elements in architectural composition. He went on the attack in his often-cited 1949 essay published soon after his arrival in Australia.¹³⁴ Adopting an ironic tone, Seidler made an emotional attack on regionalist ideas. "However, the opinions diverge on aesthetics. Organic architecture is concerned to a large extent with Nature as the source of the aesthetic formulation of building," he wrote. "Nature is considered the most perfect of creations, and architecture must blend, must become part of it. Buildings of this kind are usually difficult to distinguish from their surroundings. Where does Nature stop and architecture begin, and vice-versa? Does not such architecture seem rather weak, subservient and not very proud of itself?"

¹³¹ Philip Goad. "The Modern House in Melbourne 1945-1975." PhD thesis. University of Melbourne, 1992, pps.5/64-5/65.

¹³² Sydney Ancher. "Whither Architecture?" *Architecture*. 1 June 1936, pps.148-149, "The Evolution of Modern Architecture." *Architecture*, 1 December 1939, pps.247-249, "Educating the Architect of To-morrow." *Architecture*. 1 May 1938, pps.119-122.

¹³³ Sydney Ancher. "The Evolution of Modern Architecture." *Architecture*, 1 December 1939, pps.247-249.

¹³⁴ Harry Seidler. "Painting into Architecture." *Architecture*. October 1949, pps.119-124. Reprinted in Ann Stephens, et al. *Modernism in Australia*. pps.603-611. These views were reasserted in Harry Seidler. *Houses, Interiors, Projects*. Associated General Publications, Sydney, 1954.

Dismissing the regionalist position as a restrictive methodology, he concludes, “Followers of this romantic philosophy will go to any extreme to use natural materials such as wood and stone, preferably grown on or dug out of the building site. [...] Let us ask ourselves whether this approach allows for any change, something that we all agree to be desirable. Nature does not change essentially. Would the source of aesthetic inspiration not become exhausted [?]”.¹³⁵ No other modernist architect in NSW took such an aggressive public position in the early modernist period.

By the late 1950s, Sydney architecture was beginning a transition from early Australian modernism into new directions. Later commentators and critics have sought to examine regional Sydney domestic architecture of this transitional late 1950s-early 1960s period framed through the lens of the “Sydney School”.¹³⁶ The “Sydney School” is a term thought to have been coined in 1962 by Milo Dunphy, later formalised by Robin Boyd (1965) who wrote, “A strong regional branch developed [...] in Sydney, where there was a sufficient number of younger architects with enough in common to constitute a school”.¹³⁷ Unquestionably coined in the 1960s, the term is considered to describe the progressive domestic Sydney architectural practice of that decade. Winsome Callister has done the most to unravel the development of this term, recognising in her 1989 essay, “The Response to the City. Melbourne Regionalism of the 1950s and 1960s” that the “Sydney School” had, through popular usage and the writings of Jennifer Taylor, entered the Australian architectural lexicon.¹³⁸

The Melbourne architect Neil Clerehan also played a major role in establishing the regionalist debate and the development of the term “Sydney School” in a published article following a 1961 Sydney exhibition held in Farmer’s Blaxland Gallery called “15 Houses by Sydney Architects”. This photographic exhibition ran from 23 August to 5 September 1961 and the grouping organised by the architect Bruce Robertson, featured the Sydney architects (see Chapter 13) generally considered to be the earliest members of this “school”. The Melbourne architect Neil Clerehan reviewed the exhibition in *The Age* in the RVIA’s “Small Homes Service” section.¹³⁹ “The first thing to strike anybody with more than a passing interest in houses is their unfamiliarity,” Clerehan says in his review. “They could not be local [Victorian] houses.”

Clerehan stressed the regional aspects of Sydney’s domestic architectural practice. “Sydney has always offered better sites, bigger trees, steeper slopes and full circle views. [...] Everyday Sydney houses are very different from the Melbourne equivalents.” Clerehan then turns to regional differences observing, “Now there seems to have

¹³⁵ Harry Seidler. “Painting into Architecture.”, *Architecture*. October 1949, pps.119-124.

¹³⁶ A theme also explored by Gary Charles Wolff, “The Sydney School.” Bachelor of Architecture Thesis. UNSW, 1984.

¹³⁷ Milo Dunphy. “The Growth of an Australian Architecture.” *Hemisphere*. August 1962, and later in “The State of Australian Architecture.” *Architecture in Australia*. June 1967 and Robin Boyd. *The Puzzle of Architecture*. Melbourne University Press, 1965, p.143.

¹³⁸ Winsome Callister “Response of the City. Melbourne Regionalism of the 1950s and 1960s.” *Transition*, vol. 33, Winter, 1989, pps.33-45.

¹³⁹ Clerehan was the director of the Small Homes Service in 1961. See Harriet Edquist and Richard Black. *The Architecture of Neil Clerehan*. RMIT Press, 2005.

developed in NSW a distinct style. The houses on display will appear “foreign” to most visitors to this exhibition. [...] Whereas Melbourne houses by comparison preserve tight trim shapes and sit immaculately on their pancake-flat blocks, the Sydney houses ramble everywhere between the eucalypts and poke windows at views or walled courts.”

In 1972, Jennifer Taylor’s extended essay on the “Sydney School” in *An Australian Identity. Houses for Sydney 1953-1963* completed the foundation for the debate.¹⁴⁰ While Stanislaus Fung has attacked the proposition of the “Sydney School” as a theoretical entity and/or a consistent regional style, the work of later scholars and common usage have insured that Taylor’s “Sydney School” survives as a regional expression.¹⁴¹

Taylor used the “Sydney School” to describe Sydney domestic architecture typically found immediately north of Sydney Harbour in the steep broken terrain characterised by sandstone escarpments and mature trees from the often-serpentine branches of the *Angophora* species (*Angophora costata*, and *A. subvelutina*). As Taylor says, the structures are “... distinguished by their “relationship to the site; a deliberate attempt to blend with, and hide amongst the existing environment.”¹⁴² The interiors, she continues, are “spatially complex, often with several changes in level. Surprise and interest are generated by the internal expression of the expression of the pitch and structure of the roof...”. Taylor’s description closely parallels the architectural dialogue on regionalism that had been underway since the late 1930s and correlates well with the definitions of regionalism outlined by Frampton and Canizaro. Her characterisations of the “Sydney School” were the ultimate expression of Frampton’s proposed dialectic between “typology” and “topography”.¹⁴³

The development of Taylor’s narrative for Sydney modernism played a part in the suppression of Baldwinson’s historical presence and that of his modernist contemporaries. In *An Australian Identity* Taylor identified the principal combatants for the “battle” for Sydney modernism as Ancher and Seidler. Her work established the central thesis for the “Sydney School” when she wrote, “...the battle was not fought and won until Sydney Ancher and Harry Seidler joined the cause.”¹⁴⁴ Taylor updated her argument in a *Transition* article in 1979, “Looking at the Sydney School”, including Baldwinson amongst Ancher and Seidler but cited no commissions and reproduced no Baldwinson images in the essay.¹⁴⁵ In 1986, the introductory chapter to Taylor’s new *Australian Architecture since 1960* reaffirmed the work

¹⁴⁰ Jennifer Taylor. *An Australian Identity. Houses for Sydney*. Faculty of Architecture, University of Sydney Press, 1972.

¹⁴¹ Stanislaus Fung. “The Sydney School?” *Transition*, July 1985, pps.38-43. While Fung demurs, Winsome Callister accepts the appellation of the “Sydney School” in “Response of the City. Melbourne Regionalism of the 1950s and 1960s.” *Transition*, 33: Winter 1989, pps.33-45.

¹⁴² Jennifer Taylor. *An Australian Identity. Houses for Sydney*. Faculty of Architecture, University of Sydney Press, 1972, p.15.

¹⁴³ Kenneth Frampton. “Ten Points on an Architecture of Regionalism. A provisional Polemic.” In Vincent Canizaro, editor. *Architectural Regionalism*, Princeton Architectural Press, 2007, pps.375-385.

¹⁴⁴ Jennifer Taylor. *An Australian Identity. Houses for Sydney 1953-63*. Sydney University, 1972, p.17. Taylor illustrates Baldwinson’s incorrectly dated Dupain House (1947) on page 18. Robin Boyd had formalised the template for this journalistic tension in *Australia’s Home*, Melbourne University Press, (1952 and later editions).

¹⁴⁵ Jennifer Taylor. “Looking at the Sydney School.” *Transition*. November 1979.

of Ancher and Seidler as the founders of the “Sydney School” and once again ignored the work of Baldwinson.¹⁴⁶

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

There are consistent themes amongst the positions taken by Ancher, Moore, Bunning, Seidler and Baldwinson. All of the Sydney modernists captured in varying degrees what Philip Goad has described as the “modern” way of thinking. “Le Corbusier and Gropius, the titans of modernism had shown that modernism was a position “...that had to be professed as well as built.”¹⁴⁷ The Australian modernist community was further strengthened by the shared values of the European émigrés who had directly participated in the New Architecture of Europe.

Unity is not surprising amongst this community of architects. As Leonie Sandercock says in her study of urban planning in Australia, “What is remarkable about the literature of post-war reconstruction is the unity of themes and recommendations shared alike by Labor politicians, academics and popular writers. All were concerned with the need for a [centralised] planned economy, [...] city planning, regional and participatory planning, [...] and planning to ensure adequate housing for everyone [...].”¹⁴⁸

The early modernists admired the methodical, rational approach of a scientific method for planning, design and engineering construction, although each practitioner saw it employed in distinctly different methods. For Ancher, science was central: In 1939 he wrote, “It might be asked why the necessity for a new aesthetic which implies a new philosophy, should arise from the needs of the day? The answer is that it arises from a fundamental historical process, the application of science to life.” Ancher, Bunning and Seidler saw scientific rigor in the development of materials, engineering and construction techniques for contemporary building. Bunning, however, had a much stronger brief for the integration of science in the development of prefabrication methods and materials avoiding a “scientific” analysis of daily life. While Baldwinson acknowledged and welcomed the contribution of science and engineering in the New Architecture, particularly in the design development of functional interior planning, he always reserved his humanist position.

Despite the harmony that modernist architects displayed regarding aspects of the New Architecture, Baldwinson, Bunning and Moore parted company with the “extra-territorial” or international views of Ancher and Seidler. Baldwinson and the others advocated the adaptation of architecture to regional concerns. This was a post-war position of long standing in Victorian architecture as Evans, Edquist and others have shown, notably amongst the work of Grounds, Romberg, Janeba and Boyd.

Writing five years before Seidler’s first essay appeared, Moore was concerned over what he considered the uncritical adaptation of the “international style” for an Australian setting,

¹⁴⁶ Taylor’s myopia has also been critiqued thoroughly by Winsome Callister in her writings on the “Sydney School”.

¹⁴⁷ Philip Goad. “Best Overend. Pioneer Modernist in Melbourne.” *Fabrications*. 6: June 1995, p.120.

¹⁴⁸ Leonie Sandercock. *Cities for Sale. Property, Politics and Urban Planning in Australia*. Melbourne University Press, 1977, p.99.

finding fault in the enthusiasm for flat roofs and generous glazing for residential architecture. Although he supported the use of the materials of modernism such as concrete, steel and glass, he considered that Australian architects should support the development of a “national architecture” that responded to the local climate and site with adjustments to roof forms, internal planning and glazing.

Although Baldwinson did not isolate the development of a “national architecture” as a singular issue, he observed that the adaptation of the building to the site was a critical element of his practice. In a 1947 address, he said clearly, “Adapt building to its site, climate and environment. It is often impossible to repeat a design successfully on a different site [...]” This philosophy was integrated in his architectural practice where building forms and plans were consistently developed for a particular site.

Significantly, Baldwinson’s views diverged from the mainstream modernists in his insistence on an expressive architectural language where he evoked such terms as “emotion”, “fantasy” and “drama”. While Ancher and Seidler praised the role of science, Baldwinson spoke of “passion”. In evoking emotion, Baldwinson revealed his attraction to an architectural romanticism; he closed his 1947 talk to the Contemporary Art Society by saying, “Design with scientific reasoning but at the same time [...] temper the new forms with fantasy.” This expression of fantasy, from an architect not known for hyperbole, must be taken at face value.

While Baldwinson adopted the rather severe tenets of modernist architecture in his public addresses, he reserved the right to employ fantasy under his own terms. Fantasy is defined in standard dictionaries as “imagination unrestricted by reality” and Baldwinson’s pursuit of this elusive imaginative quality included his use of massive sandstone chimneys (with stone usually gathered locally) and stone blade walls as well as adventuresome sitings. As the following chapters will illustrate, he suspended his houses above abrupt escarpments with pier-supported or cantilevered slabs and carefully positioned his structures around existing trees and sandstone projections. His houses turn away from the streetscape to capture extensive views framed through timber-framed sliding glass doors or glazed window walls. These bushland, harbour or ocean views, concealed by the street elevations, often provided the visitor with an element of surprise equivalent to a landscape “Ha-Ha”. The views and vistas provided a theatrical experience akin to fantasy.

Like a proscenium stage, Baldwinson’s decks, window walls and verandahs provided the occupant with a direct visual access to the theatre of nature. His post-war work often employed a low bench-like railing (and at times, no barrier) that offers little or no physical protection for the occupant. This precariousness also carried its own drama.

These architectural devices and the manipulation of axial views through the plan brought nature to the doorstep of many of Baldwinson’s mid-20th century houses. When writing of his designs for the Dobell House project of 1947, he wrote, “It was felt that the beauty of the wild, rocky timbered environment [of the Dobell site] should be preserved, or rather, played up to. The building, terracing, and planting should harmonise with the natural terrain, both in colour and texture. To this end the abundant stone on the site was chosen as the principal

building material. Design emphasis, if any, is toward easy romanticism [my emphasis] rather than formalism [...].”¹⁴⁹ While Baldwinson shares the doctrines of science, rational planning and the use of concrete and glass materials of the pioneering modernists practising in Sydney, he reserved the right to explore the romantic impulses of his architectural practice.

Thus, it is argued here, the dominant narrative on the development of Sydney’s residential modernism and the “Sydney School” is incorrect. The rhetorical position on early modernism and its adaptation to a form of regional modernism was established by the powerful writings and public addresses of Baldwinson’s MARS associates and given a built form by Arthur Baldwinson and his Melbourne regionalist predecessors a decade earlier than the “Sydney School” narrative suggests. Baldwinson helped foster the first modernist community of shared experiences, he participated in the earliest development of a regionalist methodology and incorporated the shared Australian experiences of internal and external spaces in his development of a responsive Australian domestic architecture.

¹⁴⁹ “Proposed Studio for Mr William Dobell.” *Architecture*. 35: June 1947, p.20. Also cited in D.L. Johnson. *Australian Architecture 1901-51. Sources of Modernism*, 1980, p.167.

INTRODUCTION

Arthur Baldwinson's youth was passed in provincial Australian towns such as Kalgoorlie, Western Australia and Quorn, South Australia. His father Horace Stanley Baldwinson, mother Florence Grice Baldwinson and his older brother Charles were a railway family and their movements followed the development of the Australian Commonwealth railway system.

In the early 1920s, Arthur and his brother were separated and Arthur was placed with a tertiary-educated uncle in Perth. Upon his completion of high school in 1925 at the age of seventeen, his parents placed him in architectural training in the "East" while his older brother Charles was left to fend for himself in South Australia.

In 1925, Arthur Baldwinson arrived in Geelong, a small coastal town 72 kilometres from Melbourne for his first year of study at the Gordon Institute of Technology. His achievements during his study at "The Gordon" were so significant that upon the completion of his coursework in 1929, George King, the Principal of the school asked him to stay on as an instructor. Baldwinson taught courses from 1929-30 until 1932. While at "The Gordon", he won three of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architect's (RVIA) drawing and design awards, supplemented his income with drawing work for other architects and held two sales of his artworks to earn money for a trip to Britain.

Baldwinson's student views on architecture have not been recorded but other architecture students of the era have left memoirs of their youthful enthusiasms. During the 1920s and early years of the 1930s, they were surrounded by contemporary architecture that drew on the residual styles of the 19th century. The style commonly described as "Moderne" was popular amongst the more adventuresome students.

Despite the enthusiasm of his peers for the "Moderne" style, Baldwinson's surviving student design work for a RVIA competition in 1930-31 shows a Chicago School multi-storey commercial building in a "Romanesque Revival" style. His student notebooks show that he received a classical architectural education by studying the great buildings of the past.

After 1932, his professional portfolio in the Baldwinson papers illustrates that he fully embraced European modernist architecture in his personal drawing and engraving style, architectural design work and his personal observations on aesthetics.¹⁵⁰ Immersion in 1930s Britain exposed him to a new vision for architecture. There are no sketches or designs for period revival styles and no ornamental detail work to be found in his surviving portfolio or in his surviving British project drawings from 1932-37.

¹⁵⁰ The Baldwinson Papers. Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, MLMSS 1993, MLMSS 7792 & PXD 356.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA 1908

The Kalgoorlie and Boulder City region of Western Australia owes its civic existence to the discovery of gold in the area. In the late 19th century, this sparsely settled region 600 kilometres east of Perth was an arid sheep paddock, but by 1902, it had become home to 30,000 raucous miners and their camp followers. On the other hand, the Western Australian goldfields were centres of engineering innovation with major projects in hydrology, the bulk transport of ore and other mining-related advances.



Figure 2-1. Main Street of Kalgoorlie. ca. 1910. National Library of Australia. No. an24166303.

Arthur Baldwinson's parents, Horace Stanley Baldwinson and Florence Grice Baldwinson, followed the Western Australian railway where Horace was employed as an administrator.¹⁵¹ Their first son, Charles was born in Boulder City, Kalgoorlie in 1906, followed by Arthur on 26 February 1908. The family lived at 13 Barton Street.¹⁵²

Arthur's father Horace joined the new Commonwealth Railways following the creation of the Commonwealth's *Port Augusta Railway Act 1911* that resulted in a federal-funded rail link between the Kalgoorlie goldfields and Port Augusta in South Australia. This railway was not completed until 1917.

¹⁵¹ Horace was born in Saddleworth, South Australia. He enlisted in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia in the first wave of recruiting for the AIF in the 1914-18 War.

¹⁵² Greg. Holman. *Arthur Baldwinson. His Houses and Works*. Honours Thesis. Bachelor of Architecture, UNSW, 1980, p.9.

Horace joined the Australian Army in 1917 and left for France embarking from Melbourne on 11 May of the same year. He returned with a rank of Warrant Officer in a “Railway Unit”, which suggests his status as a Commonwealth Railways Station Master of the era.¹⁵³ His service record continued to record 13 Barton Street, East Kalgoorlie, WA as the home address.

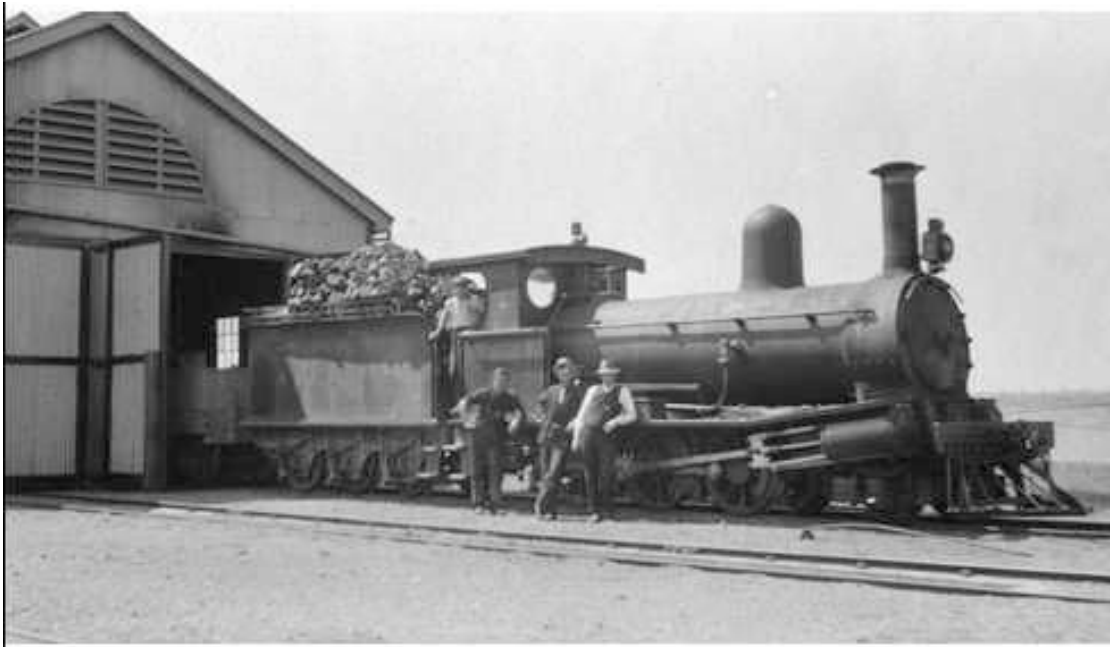


Figure 2-2. *Y Class locomotive outside the Quorn Station workshop, South Australia, 1920. Horace Baldwinson was Station Master. Mortlock Library of South Australia. No. B55492.*

In the midst of the 1914-18 War, the *Commonwealth Railways Act 1917* was expanded to assume more responsibility for the nation’s rail transport in the other states. This meant that after the war, Charles and Arthur became peripatetic railway children, frequently moving to and from Kalgoorlie, Port Augusta and Victoria with their parents Horace and Florence. As the railways were centres for technological advancement in early 20th century Australia, the brothers were reared in an environment of civil and mechanical engineering achievement.

The Baldwinson brothers Charles and Arthur began high school in 1920 in Quorn, South Australia, the picturesque railway town northeast of Port Augusta.¹⁵⁴ Quorn and its Dutch-gabled railway station was once an important stop on the railway journey to Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. The surrounding Flinders Ranges provided the brothers with a more attractive setting than the mullock heaps and wind-blown tailings of Boulder City, Kalgoorlie.

¹⁵³ www.awm.gov.au/nominalrolls/ww1/embarkation/person. 12 October 2006.

¹⁵⁴ Sheila Baldwinson telephone interview, Port Augusta, South Australia, 24 January 2004.



Figure 2-3. Quorn Station from the station platform. Quorn is now the site of an active heritage railway. The Station Master's house also survives. July 2006.

Separation

For reasons now lost to the memories of the surviving family, the brothers were separated in the early 1920s and Arthur moved to Perth where he lived with his uncle, Charles Grice (1889-1963), a schoolmaster at Perth Boys School where Arthur was enrolled. His brother Charles Baldwinson stayed behind in Quorn.¹⁵⁵

The Perth Boys School was the oldest government school in Western Australia. The school had begun in the mid-19th century in an Anglo-Dutch Revival building at 139 St George's Terrace. In the late 19th century, the Perth Boys' and Girls' Schools moved to a new red brick building at 51 James Street, Perth.

¹⁵⁵ Charles became the Head of BHP's Draughting Department and worked for BHP, Whyalla, South Australia until his retirement in 1971. Charles's son Peter Baldwinson became an architect and practiced in Adelaide. (retired in 2004) and his daughter Mary studied acting and lives in Melbourne. Sheila Baldwinson telephone interview, *ibid*.

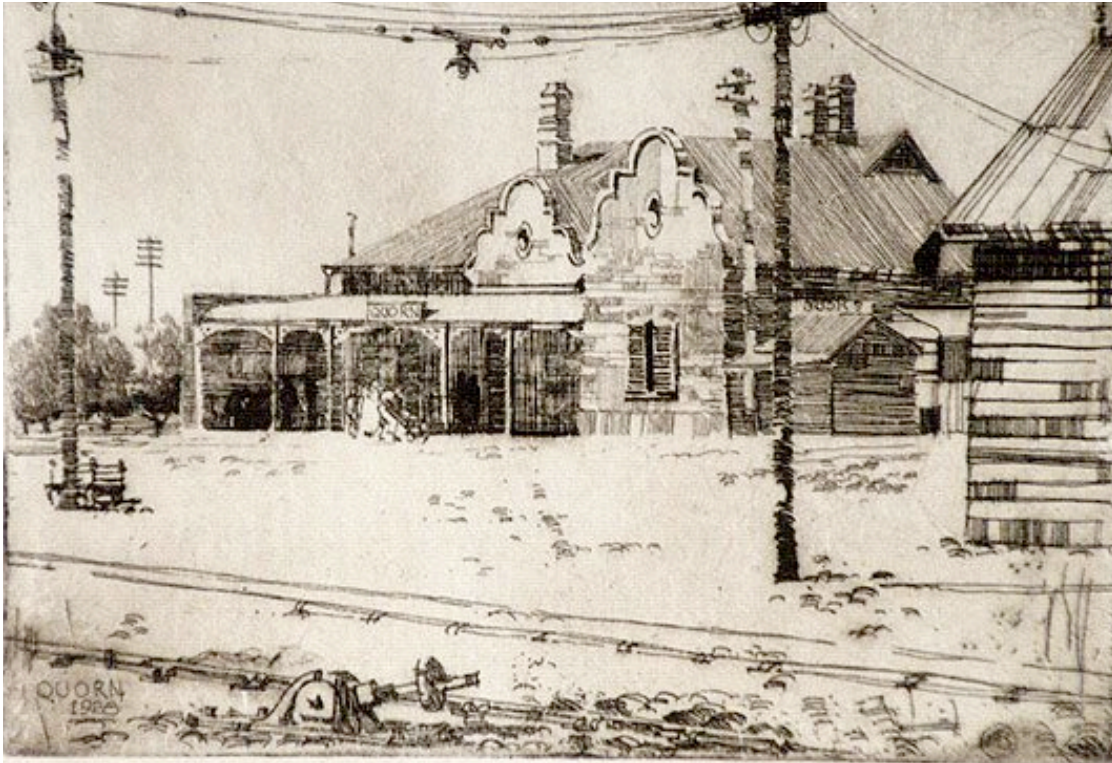


Figure 2- 4. Arthur Baldwinson. Quorn Station, 1928. Engraving. National Gallery of Australia. No. 9268.

This new building, designed by George Temple-Poole (1856-1934), Superintendent of Public Works in Western Australia, retains some of its original Renaissance Revival composition and is now the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA). Poole was a notable figure in Western Australian architecture and his biographers suggest that he designed over 200 buildings in the state.¹⁵⁶ He was the founder of the WA Institute of Architects in 1896, active in town planning and was the original designer of Perth's notable King's Park, overlooking the Swan River.¹⁵⁷

Arthur's uncle Charles Grice was a rarity in the Australian secondary school system, a university-educated schoolmaster. During an interview, one of Arthur's surviving relatives in Perth says that the family considered Arthur to be "gifted" although it is difficult to interpret this assessment within the context of the early 1920s.¹⁵⁸ But despite his privileged two-year

¹⁵⁶ Harriet Edquist, "George Temple-Poole." in *Pioneers of Modernism*. Melbourne University Press, 2008, pps.3-6.

¹⁵⁷ Harriet Edquist, "George Temple-Poole." in *Pioneers of Modernism*. Melbourne University Press, 2008, pps.3-6. Also Ray Oldham, "Poole, George Thomas Temple (1856 - 1934)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 11, Melbourne University Press, 1988, pps.257-258.

¹⁵⁸ Peter Grice telephone interview. Perth, WA, 28 March 2004.

interlude in Perth, the young Baldwinson attended two more high schools (Wembley Downs, Hale Road, Perth, then back to Kalgoorlie) before he finally completed his studies in 1925.¹⁵⁹



Figure 2-5. George Temple-Poole. Perth Boys and Girls School, James Street, Perth, Battye Library, State Library of Western Australia. ca. 1905. No. 2945.

There is no material surviving (drawings, letters, diaries) within the Baldwinson papers at the State Library of New South Wales to suggest that Arthur might have been artistically precocious or demonstrated a willingness to study architecture. But his family's desire to place him with his uncle Charles Grice in Perth and his father Horace's determination to send him to an architecture school suggests some recognition of his abilities. His father Horace Baldwinson expended considerable energy into placing his son into tertiary training by writing inquiries to two of Western Australia's most notable early 20th century intellectuals. According to an interview with his brother's wife Sheila Baldwinson, Horace's first son Charles was left to organise his own engineering training.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Holman, op. cit., p.11-12. Other schooling dates have been published. Tom O'Mahony's obituary summary of Baldwinson's career also states that he finished his Western Australian schooling in 1925. "Arthur Baldwinson Obituary". *RAIA News*, December 1969.

¹⁶⁰ Peter Grice telephone interview. Perth, WA, 28 March 2004, Sheila Baldwinson telephone interviews. Port Augusta, SA, 24 January 2004.

“THE GORDON”

After finishing his schooling in Western Australia, Arthur Baldwinson enrolled in 1925 to study architecture at the Gordon Institute of Technology, Geelong, Victoria.¹⁶¹ Greg Holman discovered that “the Gordon”, as it was commonly known to Victorians, was recommended to Baldwinson’s father by J.S. Battye, the Pro-Chancellor of the University of Western Australia in 1925.¹⁶²

As a former Geelong resident and Geelong College graduate, J.S. Battye was well acquainted with the recently renamed Gordon Technical College (Gordon Institute of Technology after 1921) and a personal friend of its energetic Principal, George Raymond King (1872-1950).¹⁶³ George King was born in Ballarat and articled to the architect A. J. Derrick, while attending classes at Gordon Technical College.

In his later role as instructor, head of the architecture programme and Principal of the Gordon Institute, King has been described as the first professional educator in Victoria to provide for the “complete training of the architect”.¹⁶⁴ The Melbourne architect and critic Robin Boyd praised King as the leader “...who has indirectly fostered more good architecture than any other man in Australia.”¹⁶⁵ King welcomed Arthur Baldwinson’s application and noted that the Gordon’s fees were £16/16/0 per annum.¹⁶⁶

Architecture Training at the Gordon Institute of Technology

The Gordon began as the Geelong Mechanics Institute and by 1887, the Institute had evolved into the Gordon Technical College. When the Gordon opened as a technical school, the new college was able to offer its 63 students a diverse range of classes in architecture, shorthand, bookkeeping and languages.¹⁶⁷

Building and drawing construction were taught from 1887 and a two-year course in architecture established in 1888.¹⁶⁸ As student numbers increased, these courses developed

¹⁶¹ Baldwinson’s personal résumé states 1926. (Résumés in Baldwinson papers. SLNSW). Course certificates in Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, 1548/69. Box (5) 1 contains course certificates from 1925.

¹⁶² J.S. Battye to H.S. Baldwinson, 14 April 1925. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, 1548/69, Box (5) 4 see also Greg Holman, *Arthur Baldwinson. His Houses and Works*. Honours Thesis. Bachelor of Architecture, UNSW, 1980, p.15.

¹⁶³ J.S. Battye was the former Assistant Librarian at the Public Library of Victoria who became the Chief Librarian of the Western Australian (WA) Public Library. Battye played a major role in the cultural life of Western Australia as the General Secretary of the WA Library, Museum and Art Gallery, a Western Australian historian; early organiser of the Western Australian Historical Society and later; as the Chancellor of the University of Western Australia (1936-1943).

¹⁶⁴ K. Sillcock. “George Raymond King, O.B.E. (1872-1950)”. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1891-1939, vol.9, Melbourne University Press, 1983.

¹⁶⁵ Boyd, Robin. *Victorian Modern. Architectural Students’ Society of the RVIA*, 1947, p. 12.

¹⁶⁶ G.R. King to H.S. Baldwinson, 28 April 1925. Baldwinson, Further papers, ML MSS 1548/69, Box (5) 4.

¹⁶⁷ The school is named for the British general, Charles Gordon (1833-1885), killed by a Moslem insurrection during the siege of Khartoum in the African Sudan. Australia sent colonial troops to Gordon’s aid but the war ended before they reached the Sudan.

¹⁶⁸ Gordon Long. *The Gordon. A Century of Influence. A Centenary History of the Gordon Technical College*. College Council, 1987, p.97.

into departments and later into “schools” or “faculties”. By 1918, the Gordon was offering its students Associate Diplomas in architecture, surveying and engineering.

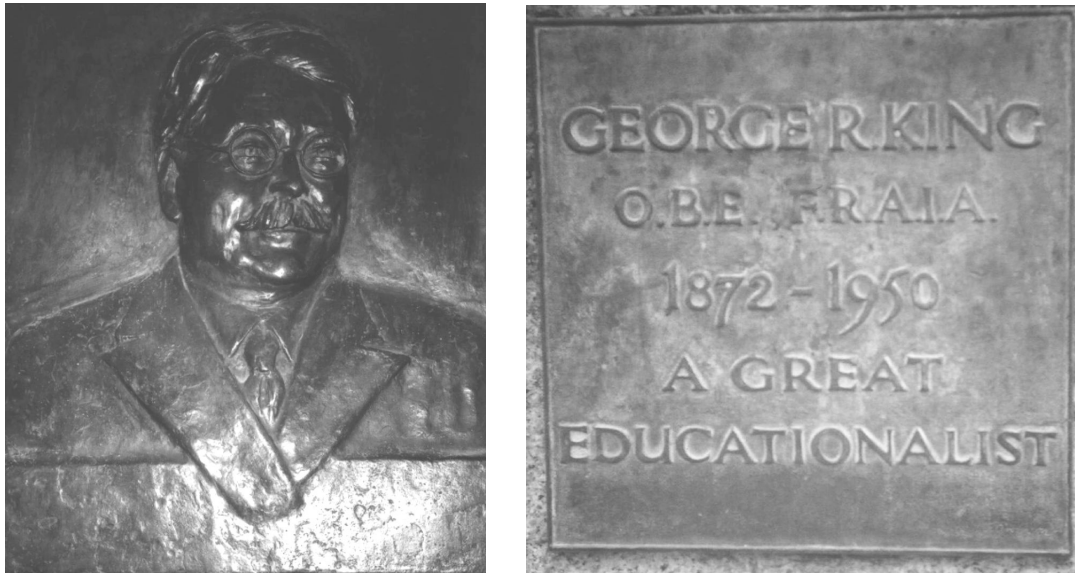


Figure 2-6. Wallace Anderson, bas-relief of George R. King, Gordon Institute (left), (n.d.), Davidson Hall, Gordon Institute, Geelong. Memorial plaque (right) in Johnstone Park opposite Davidson Hall.

Architecture (ARVIA, ARIBA, and Registration)

Architectural Art

Master Builders Course

**The above specially features at
The Gordon Inst of Techy
Geelong, Victoria
George R. King, FRVIA, Principal.**

Figure 2-7. A facsimile of an advertisement for the Gordon Institute of Technology architectural courses appearing in the journal *Manuscripts* in 1934.¹⁶⁹

The Gordon was one of the first Victorian institutions to teach architecture as a distinct discipline.¹⁷⁰ The Melbourne’s Working Men’s College architecture certificate course

¹⁶⁹ *Manuscripts*, No. 8, 1934. p.74.

¹⁷⁰ J.M.Freeland states that a four year part-time course was begun in 1890 at the Working Men’s College under Harold Desbrowe-Anneer and the RVIA’s John Little. J.M. Freeland. *The Making of a Profession*. Angus and Robertson & RAIA, 1971, p.211. See also Julie Willis. “Conscious Design. The Melbourne University

appeared in 1890. Melbourne University's architecture diploma course began in 1915 followed by its Architectural Design Atelier programme overseen by the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects (RVIA) in 1919.¹⁷¹ The RAIA historian J.M. Freeland says that the first Melbourne University architecture degree was granted in 1931.¹⁷²



Figure 2-8. Davidson Hall (on the left), detail, Gordon Technical College, Geelong, ca.1900. Architecture was taught on the upper level of this building. Shirley Jones Collection of Victorian Postcards. State Library of Victoria. No. H35448.

George King had come to the Gordon in an administrative position as Secretary in 1898 and began teaching architecture from 1902 and continued until his retirement in 1935. In the first decade of the 20th century, he gave up his private practice with Seely, King & Everett to become Principal of the school and the Head of the architectural section (from 1909 to 1935). King's influence in Victoria was pervasive. He was a member of the RVIA's Architect's Registration Board, later becoming a Fellow of the RVIA and the Victorian Institute of Town Planning and, of course, King was also a member of the T-Square Club in Melbourne founded by Harold Desbrowe-Anneer.¹⁷³

Architectural Atelier 1919-1947." *Fabrications*. vol.13: 2, May 2004 for a more thorough treatment of the atelier's history.

¹⁷¹ J.M. Freeland. *The Making of a Profession*. Angus and Robertson & RAIA, 1971, p.217. The first graduate was Allan Ralton.

¹⁷² *ibid*, p.217.

¹⁷³ K. Sillcock, "King, George Raymond (1872 - 1950)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 9, Melbourne University Press, 1983, pps.594-595.

Students training at the Gordon were initially prepared for the building and construction trade but under King, the course expanded to prepare them for the RVIA Architect's Registration Board examinations. The emphasis was on passing the RVIA examination for an architectural qualification rather than gaining a Gordon diploma. The Gordon taught its students from the model established by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) as early as 1910. That is, "...the curriculum should be grounded in the architectural classics, historical knowledge, drawing and mathematics."¹⁷⁴ Students at the Gordon trained for the State examination of these key attributes. By 1931, a British Registration Act insured that the RIBA assumed responsibility for the training of UK architects.¹⁷⁵ After 1919, Gordon students were also encouraged to take architectural design at the Architectural Design Atelier at Melbourne University. By the 1930s, Gordon architecture diploma students were granted exemptions from the first three years of the Melbourne University diploma course.¹⁷⁶ In 1934, the Gordon offered courses in architecture, architectural art and Master Builder's training.

The architecture department was located in Davidson Hall on the first floor of the castellated brick building in Fenwick Street facing Johnstone Park. The architecture students of this era have been recalled as highly entertaining and, on occasion, displayed a range of anarchic behaviour. This disruptive behaviour included unauthorised entry into locked studios for "all-nighters" and a daily shower of missiles onto passing staff and students from the architects' first floor rooms.¹⁷⁷

Arthur Collins, architecture student at the Gordon from 1919-1922 recorded his experience in the programme during the 1987 Centennial celebrations.

*Most of our time was taken up in meticulously copying plates of the classical orders and of 19th century building construction. Some emphasis was placed on rendering and skiagraphy [shadow-rendering]. Rendering in those days was a tedious process, involving repeated washings of dilute Indian ink, ground up on a palette from a solid stick. Watercolours were used as well, and the skills thus developed stood us in good stead in professional life, as presentation was then an important part of Architecture Design. In my time, Marcus Norris, and a little later, Arthur Baldwinson, were the best in this regard.*¹⁷⁸

Collins, a somewhat older associate of Arthur Baldwinson, found King's personality somewhat overpowering.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Mark Crinson and Jules Lubbock. *Architecture. Art or Profession. 300 Years of Architectural Education in Britain*. Manchester University Press, 1994. p.75

¹⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p.85

¹⁷⁶ Gordon Long. *The Gordon. A Century of Influence. A Centenary History of the Gordon Technical College*. College Council, 1987, p.97. Melbourne University first offered a six year degree course in 1956. Freeland, *op. cit.*, p.211.

¹⁷⁷ Long, *op. cit.*, pps.97-98.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p.275.

¹⁷⁹ On the other hand, Harold Bartlett, a former student described King as "a great teacher and an inspirational force". Harold Bartlett. "So I decided to go Overseas." (Pt.2). *Architecture Australia*, February/March 1978, pps.44-45.

[The] [...] course was redeemed a good deal by the personality of G.R. King and the attitudes he instilled into us. His influence extended in some cases for many years after leaving. I personally found it rather overwhelming and escaped as soon as I could [...]. He was a consummate salesman and cultivated the profession in Melbourne and elsewhere in the interests of his students, not only in getting their first jobs, but also in later years. In my case [George King] used his acquaintance with the Clerk of Works on the Commonwealth Bank then being built in Geelong to place me with the Sydney-based firm which was the architect. Two years later he decided that I had gained as much as I could from that job and placed me with another of his friends, the Chief Architect of the Public Works Department.¹⁸⁰

Arthur Collins later returned to the Gordon in 1938 after six years in Britain's Middlesex City Council, to assume King's position as head of the architecture department. Collins retired from the Gordon in 1977.

BALDWINSON AT THE GORDON INSTITUTE

Arthur Baldwinson began his training in the mid-term of 1925 and enrolled in first year courses. His course certificates provide significant insight into the training of an architect of this era.¹⁸¹ His first term courses included model drawing; building construction; practical chemistry; architecture; physics; drawing for builders and artisans and theoretical chemistry.



Figure 2-9. Arthur Baldwinson. Perspective of Santa Sophia, Istanbul, 1926. Arthur Baldwinson student notebook. Chris Wood collection, Melbourne.

In 1926, Baldwinson obtained passes in Model drawing; building construction (2); architecture; drawing ornament and modelling ornament (skiagraphy).¹⁸² In his second year courses in 1927, the emphasis on drawing and rendering continued. He took courses in modelling the human figure; building construction; drawing ornament; architecture (2); lettering and general design.

¹⁸⁰ Long, op. cit., pps.275-276.

¹⁸¹ "Educational Certificates." in Baldwinson, Further papers, MLMSS 1993, 1548/69, Box 4 (5).

¹⁸² Skiagraphy is the modelling of shadows in 3-dimensional forms.

In Baldwin's final year, a half term in 1928, his emphasis was almost exclusively on drawing and design. The coursework included building construction; drawing the human figure (2); advanced general design and historic ornament.

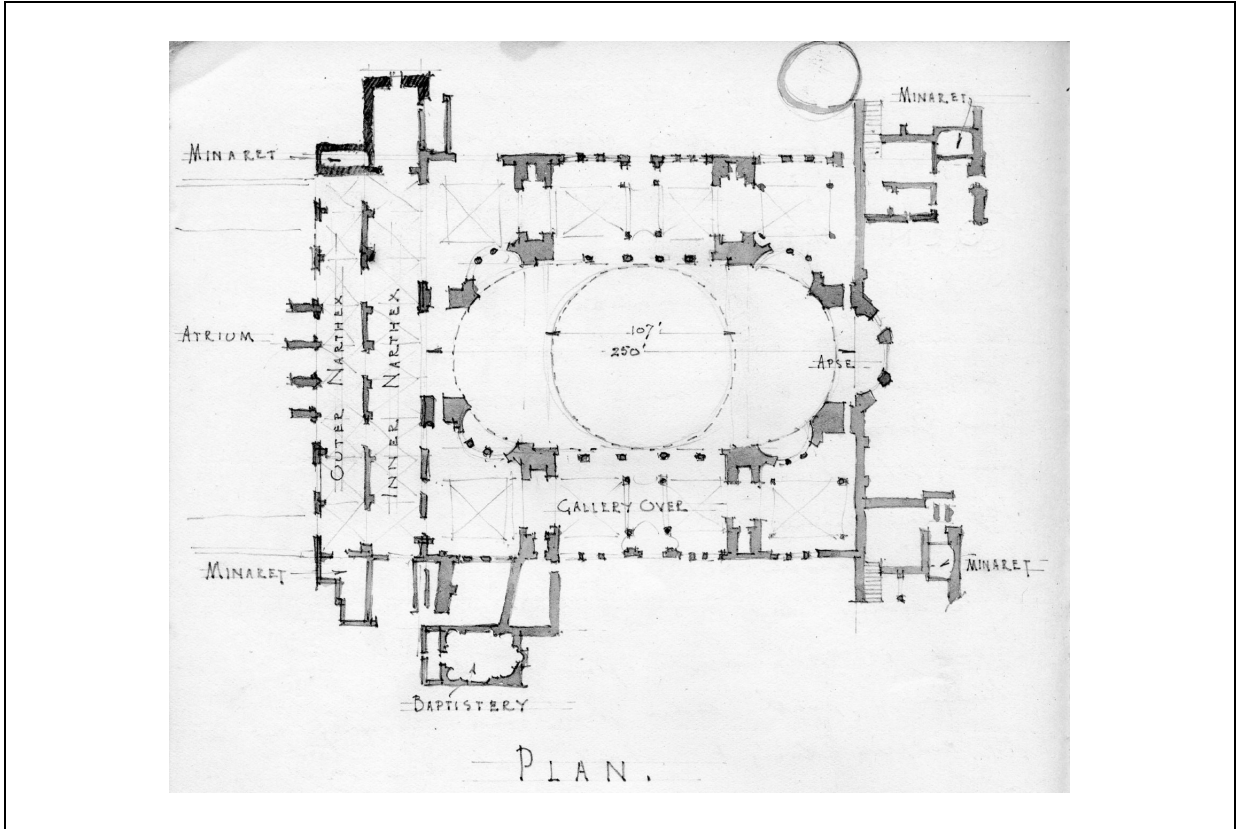


Figure 2-10. Arthur Baldwinson. Plan of Santa Sophia, Istanbul, 1926. Arthur Baldwinson student notebook. Chris Wood collection, Melbourne.

By the end of Baldwinson's first year, impressed by his need or by the young student's ability, King recommended him for a studentship. G.R. King wrote in an avuncular tone to his father Horace Baldwinson of his progress. "His conduct during the year has been all that could be desired, in fact, I have never had to in any way admonish him. I shall recommend him for a studentship next year which will save fees, and in addition, I hope to be able to provide an avenue for him, whereby he can earn a little in his spare time."¹⁸³ The possibility of spare time earnings probably relied on Baldwinson's drawing and rendering abilities.

Baldwinson's coursework shows the heavy emphasis placed by "The Gordon" on drawing and rendering. His training, student drawings in the Chris Wood Collection and subsequent career show that he clearly possessed talent in visualisation. His active interests in art led him to supplemental drawing courses and involvement in the Gordon's Art Club.

¹⁸³ G.R. King to Horace Baldwinson, 16 December 1926. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, 1548/69, Box 4 (5), See also Holman, op. cit., p.18.

Art Teaching at the Gordon

Painting and sculpture were taught at the technical school from its beginnings. The Gordon's art studios, named after former director George Hitchcock, were erected in 1910. During Baldwinson's time at the school, Wallace Anderson (1888-1975) was one of the more influential teachers. Anderson is primarily known as a sculptor and is best recalled for his sculpture of Simpson and the Donkey (1935) in the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance Gardens. An Anderson *bas-relief* portrait of G.R. King in bronze is in the foyer of Davidson Hall, the former Gordon architecture building.



Figure 2-11. Arthur Baldwinson. *Belcher Fountain, Geelong, 1928.* (Etching) National Gallery of Australia.

Greg Holman's 1981 interviews with Tom O'Mahony, a former student of Baldwinson led Holman to believe that King's assistant in architecture, Marcus Norris, was the greatest influence on Baldwinson's drawing skills.¹⁸⁴ Holman could not have known that Baldwinson arrived in Geelong with considerable drawing ability as evidenced by his student work.

¹⁸⁴ Holman, op. cit., p.18.



Figure 2-12. Arthur Baldwinson perspective. H.B. and F.B.Tompkins, Myer Emporium. Lonsdale Street Melbourne, 1929. State Library of Victoria, No. H2006. 150/13.

However, Arthur also acquired considerable skill in intaglio (etching, engraving, linocut, woodcut) techniques while he was training in Geelong. Where were these skills acquired? No course work in intaglio technique is recorded at “The Gordon”. The only member of the art faculty during this period possessing intaglio experience was Harry (Henry) Rayner (1903-1957) who had trained and then taught at the school. Rayner (also known as Raynor) had a later career in England and is best recalled as an etcher.¹⁸⁵ Perhaps Baldwinson had training with him.

Baldwinson’s engraving skills were impressive and by 1929, he had held his first solo exhibition through the Gordon Art Club in Davidson Hall. Fifty-five works (watercolours, prints, sketches) were offered for sale.¹⁸⁶ Some of the works from the show were later acquired by the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) and illustrate Baldwinson’s 1920s compositional abilities, drawing style and soft-ground etching skills. The collection includes a selection of Geelong scenes from 1927-29 including the Belcher Fountain, the Free Library, Christ Church, Geelong and the Porch, Bank of Australia, Saint Peter and Paul’s, a St Mary’s interior and a Geelong dredging barge. Amongst the NGA’s collection are also

¹⁸⁵ Long, *op. cit.*, p.99.

¹⁸⁶ Holman, *op. cit.*, p.20.

some South Australian scenes including Fishing Boats, Port Augusta and the railway station at Quorn.

As a student and later an architect, Baldwinson supplemented his earnings through his “delineation” of designs by other architects including the firm H.B. and F.B. Tompkins 1929 elevations for the Myer Emporium, Lonsdale Street. His success in “delineation” work was to produce valuable drawing commissions in the years to come.



Figure 2-13. Arthur Baldwinson. RVIA Sketching Prize, North Tower, St Mary's, Geelong, 1929. *Journal of the RVIA*, July 1930.

Baldwinson also received a number of Royal Victorian Institute of Architects (RVIA) prizes through his architectural drawing and design. During the 1929 RVIA prize round, he was awarded the Campbell Prize, a RVIA Sketching Prize, for his pencil sketch of the north tower of St Mary's, Geelong.¹⁸⁷ In 1930, while working as a Gordon lecturer, he won the

¹⁸⁷ Holman, op. cit., p.21 see also *Journal of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects*. Vol. XXVII, May 1930, p.29.

RVIA Bronze Medal for Measured Drawings, for his plans, elevations and sections of St James Old Cathedral, Melbourne.¹⁸⁸

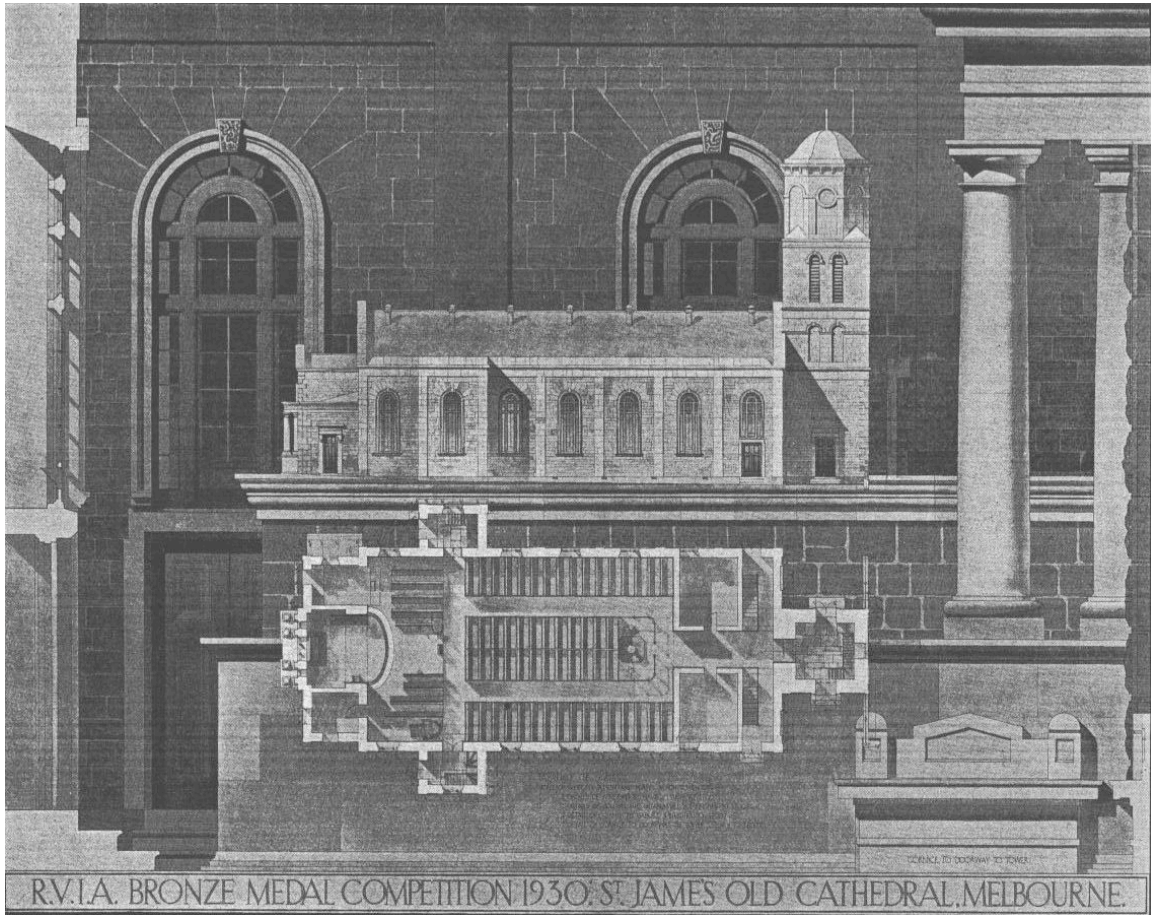


Figure 2-14. Arthur Baldwinson. RVIA Bronze Medal. St James Old Cathedral, 1930. *Journal of the RVIA*, July 1930.

The RVIA assessors were especially enthusiastic about Baldwinson's work on the St James Old Cathedral. "The author of this set is to be congratulated upon the very excellent standard of his work throughout. [...] In every way the drawings reflect great credit on the author. [...] The assessors suggest that the plan sheet of this set be preserved by the Institute (RVIA)."¹⁸⁹ These awards produced medals and cash awards.

¹⁸⁸ Holman, op. cit., p.21 see also *Journal of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects*. Vol. XXVII, July 1930, p.57. A printed illustration also in Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993 PXD 736, Box 4.

¹⁸⁹ "Measured Drawing Competition 1930." *Journal of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects*, Vol. XXVII, July 1930, p.78.

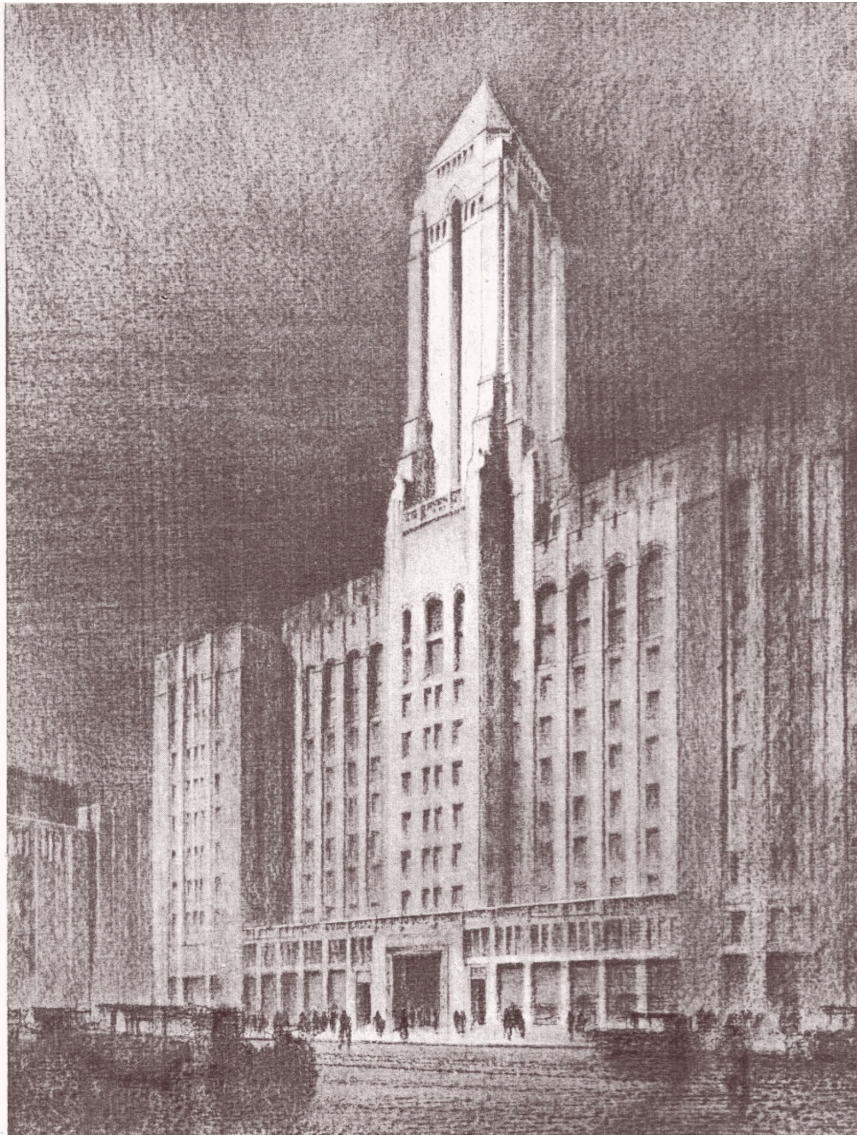


Figure 2-15. Arthur Baldwinson. RVIA Designing and Planning Prize, 1931. *Journal of the RVIA*, July 1931.

In the following year, he continued his RVIA prize successes with the award of the 1931 Silver Medal for Designing and Planning, a design and perspective of a Romanesque Revival-style skyscraper.¹⁹⁰ Assembling his architectural illustration work, etchings and watercolours, Baldwinson held a final Geelong exhibition of etchings and watercolours in 1932 to earn money for his forthcoming overseas trip.¹⁹¹

After Arthur Baldwinson completed his coursework in 1929, King asked this prize-winning student to continue as a lecturer in 1930.¹⁹² The transformation of a college's better students into lecturers is a persistent pattern in early 20th century technical college training when qualified instructors were scarce. Art instructor Wallace Anderson and the architect Arthur Collins also trained at "The Gordon" had also returned to teach.

Baldwinson notes in his professional résumés that his title at "The Gordon" was "Architectural Instructor (1930-32)".¹⁹³ What were the precise duties of an Architectural Instructor? According to one of his students, Tom O'Mahony:

*Baldwinson was virtually in charge of all years. [...] He taught all the architectural subjects which included draughtsmanship [...] design in senior years, building construction including the drawing of details. In addition to the architecture students, he taught building construction students in the evenings. [...] Outdoor sketching was an integral part of the course.*¹⁹⁴

MELBOURNE ARCHITECTURE DURING BALDWINSON'S ERA

Baldwinson spent seven years in Geelong from his first year in 1925 until his departure for London in 1932. When he began his training in 1925, the significant architecture of Geelong and Melbourne was dominated by civic buildings and monuments. When a poll inviting Victorians to nominate the significant buildings of Melbourne for the forthcoming 1934 centennial celebrations was tallied, the community considered that amongst the city's most "important" buildings were Parliament House, the Treasury Building, St Patrick's and St Paul's Cathedral, the Law Courts and the Bank of NSW in Collins Street.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ Noted in professional résumé reproduced in *Architecture and Arts and the MODERN HOME*. June 1955, p.19, *Journal of the Victorian Institute of Architects*, Vol. XXVIII, July 1931, p.67. A cutting of this illustration is in Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993. PXD 736, Box 4. The original illustration's location is unknown.

¹⁹¹ 24 January 2004. Interview with Sheila Baldwinson who owns watercolours from this exhibition.

Baldwinson's watercolours do not seem to be in public collections.

¹⁹² Amongst Baldwinson's peers at "The Gordon" were Tom O'Mahony, a life-long friend of Baldwinson, Ewen Laird, Max Deans, Ron Lyon, Marcus Norris and Arthur Collins.

¹⁹³ Many résumé examples appear in Baldwinson, Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792. The most recent dated résumé sighted in MLMSS 7792 was 1964.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Tom O'Mahony by Greg Holman on 14 February 1980, Holman, op. cit., p.19-20.

¹⁹⁵ Mary Turner Shaw. "The Centenary in Double Vision." in 1934. *A Year in the Life of Victoria*. State Library of Victoria. 1985, p.44.



Figure 2-16. Smith & Johnson. The Law Courts, 1874-1884 (now Supreme Court). This complex was voted amongst Melbourne's most important buildings during the 1934 Victorian Centennial. Australian Archives No. A1200: L3857.

Although in the mid-1920s, Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin's Melbourne practice (1914-24) was completing the celebrated Capitol Theatre (Swanston Street) and Leonard House (Elizabeth Street) in 1924, Melbourne's commercial streetscape in the mid-1920s was dominated by period revival (largely classical) works.

In the suburbs, the bungalow reigned supreme. Mary Turner Shaw, a pupil at the Melbourne University Architectural Atelier, a contemporary of Baldwinson and later fellow-employee at Stephenson & Turner, has left a reminiscence of her student years in the 1920s and early 1930s. "At the time the lingering popular conception of an architect was as a rather arty gentleman who designed houses." "Domestic work", Shaw wrote, seldom paid office expenses.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ Mary Turner Shaw, *op. cit.*, p.44.



Figure 2-17. Building in Melbourne in the 1920s. Swanston Street with the Nicholas Building (left) by Harry Norris, 1925-26 and the “Gothic” tower of the Manchester Unity Building (left distance) by Marcus Barlow, 1929-32. Rose Stereograph Company, Melbourne, 1956. State Library of Victoria No. b04705.



Figure 2-18. Evan Smith, Victorian Government Architect. Emily McPherson College, 1926. State Library of Victoria, No. jc019659. Photo ca. 1960.

Naturally, there were dissenting views regarding Melbourne's early 20th century architecture from the new generation of architects and dissenter Mary Turner Shaw wrote of her generation:

[As students] [w]hat we most approved was horizontality, preferably in brickwork in the mode of the Dutchman Dudok, with rows of windows and bands of cement render. Surfaces were generally plain, though the severity of the Bauhaus School had not then been imposed upon us.

If the material was concrete then there might be incised lines or vertical flutings in the render, even restrained panels of decorative motifs in zig-zags or concentric curves. Radically rounded corners, projecting bays and quasi-towers were also "in". Cast iron lace and multicoloured brickwork (blood and bandages), we regarded with horror and any house renovation began with tearing off the ironwork balustrades and replacing them with flat timber rails. [...] Whole series of articles in the papers were devoted to the design of "streamlined" kitchen and bedroom cupboards. [...].¹⁹⁷



Figure 2-19. Percy Meldrum, Stephenson & Meldrum. Castlemaine Art Gallery, 1931. "...there might [...] panels of decorative motifs in zig-zags or concentric curves." (Mary Turner Shaw) The opening of the Castlemaine Art Gallery. State Library of Victoria, No. 13836.

¹⁹⁷ Mary Turner Shaw. op. cit., pps. 43-47.

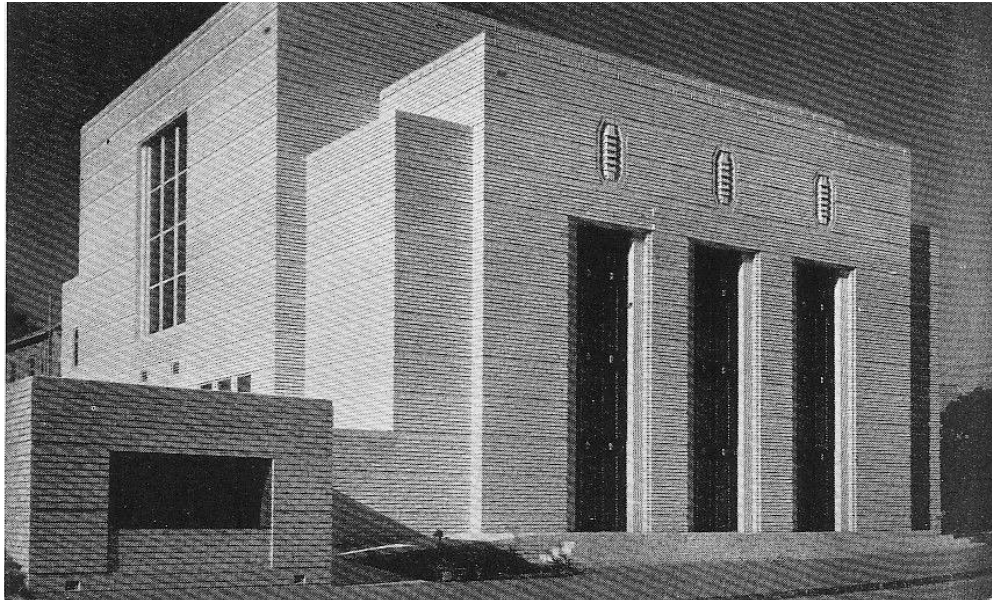


Figure 2-20. Bates Smart & McCutcheon. The Second Church of Christ, Scientist, Camberwell, 1937. “[W]hat we most approved was horizontality, preferably in brickwork ...”. (Mary Turner Shaw) *Architectural Review*, July 1948, p.32.



Figure 2-21. Norman Seabrook. MacRobertson Girls High School detail, South Melbourne, 1934. “... brickwork in the mode of the Dutchman Dudok.” Photo Rose Stereographic Series, P.2611. SLV rg003761.

The Jazz Age

The Melbourne architectural style described as “Moderne” precisely matches Shaw’s description of horizontality, strip windows, cement render and rounded corners. During his years at “The Gordon” from 1925 to 1932, Baldwinson would have had limited opportunities to see local work in this idiom. Surveys of the Melbourne Moderne style by Carol Hardwick, Philip Goad and Doug Evans demonstrate Moderne commissions on the scale of the Burnham Beeches residence were unusual in Victoria.¹⁹⁸ Before his departure for Europe in 1932, however, Baldwinson would have seen the published work of Harry Norris at Burnham Beeches (1930-33), Meldrum’s Castlemaine Art Gallery (opened 1931) and built elements of Marcus Barlow’s designs for the Manchester Unity Building, Melbourne (completed in 1932).¹⁹⁹



Figure 2-22. Harry Norris. Burnham Beeches, 1930-33. State Library of Victoria. No. 24760.

¹⁹⁸ Doug Evans. “Modern in Melbourne.” users.tce. rmit.edu.au /e03159/Mod Melb/mm2/lect/30’s, 10 October 2005. Philip Goad. “The Modern House in Melbourne 1945-1975.” PhD Thesis. Department of Architecture and Building, University of Melbourne, 1992. Carol Hardwick. “Art Deco Architecture in Victoria”, *Transition*, September/December 1981, pps.23-25.

¹⁹⁹ Harry Norris’s Burnham Beeches, a ponderous three-level concrete structure with sweeping balconies, transparent balustrades over rounded corners and a substantial cantilevered *porte cochere* was shown in the press.

While built works may have been rare, Julie Willis illustrates in a survey of Leighton Irwin's teaching at the Melbourne University Atelier that the variations of an international Moderne style were common currency amongst the students after 1930 and "... at the Atelier, from 1930 modernism was the dominant language..."²⁰⁰



Figure 2-23. Oakley & Parkes. Yule House, Little Collins Street, 1932. State Library of Victoria No. jc018347

While his views may have shifted after his exposure to European modernists, Baldwinson became publicly dismissive of Moderne work. An address on contemporary trends in architecture by Baldwinson to the Contemporary Art Society, Sydney in 1947, he echoes many of Robin Boyd's criticisms of the Jazz Age style in his *Victorian Modern* of 1947.²⁰¹ Baldwinson observed that "The thoughtless and unscrupulous seized on the new form [of modern design] and exploited them as they had their Stock Broker Tudor motifs. For a time, [this] empty vulgarity endangered the integrity of the New Architecture."²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Julie Willis. "Conscious Design. The Melbourne University Architectural Atelier 1919-1947." *Fabrications*. vol.13: 2, May 2004. pps.43-62.

²⁰¹ Robin Boyd. *Victorian Modern*. Architectural Students' Society, RVIA, 1947, p.17.

²⁰² Arthur Baldwinson. Address to the Contemporary Art Society, 21 November 1947. (Typescript.) Baldwinson Papers, MLMSS 7792. Baldwinson, like Robin Boyd, owes a debt to Osbert Lancaster's satire *Pillar to Post. The Pocket Lamp of Architecture*. John Murray, 1938 where "Stockbroker's Tudor" was first described and drawn.

Leighton Irwin and modernism at the Atelier

The architect and lecturer Leighton Irwin had defined the principal themes of modernism several years earlier in a 1930 Melbourne address to the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects (RVIA). Irwin gave his address following an architectural tour of Europe and the United States and the text of his lecture was later published in the *RVIA Journal*.²⁰³

Irwin was the Director of the Melbourne University Architectural Atelier after 1925 and President of the RVIA after 1931. His views (and his lecture) would have received special attention in Victoria. Irwin was an influential teacher and Robin Boyd includes his architectural work, especially the Prince Henry's Hospital, as part of his "Revolution of 1934" that was said to set the stage for Australian modernism.²⁰⁴

Leighton Irwin condemned historicism in his 1930 address by saying that, "I have long felt that there is something wrong where an architect spends a great deal of his student days in making himself so familiar with the past that he is able to-day to reproduce a Grecian temple, complete with flutes *entasis* and call it a "church" or a "cinema." [...] Is he doing a service to the public which he serves and I have to admit doubts? [...] Old forms will not fit new functions. Just as the motor car and the aeroplane are the outcome of the practical necessity born of their purpose, so must architecture follow the needs and conditions of the times."

Irwin also spoke about the issue of mass production and standardisation that he saw emerging in the United States. "Mass production at first," he said, "like everything new, we thought was all wrong, but we can see that it has the possibility of doing great good, the Ford motor car is an example. [...] Everything in the Ford works has to be made absolutely perfectly to standardise and they have most accurate tests to determine that this is so, in order that when things come together they may be a perfect fit [...]."

"The outcome of this tendency gives us another big point which applies to Architecture. That is, 'Uniformity.' Uniformity is a very important thing when we consider it in relation to our conditions today. It gives similarity of outlook but not necessarily monotony."

²⁰³ Leighton Irwin. "The Trend of Design as shown in Modern Architecture." *RVIA Journal*. 18: July 1930, pps.65-74, reprinted in Ann Stephen, et al. *Modernism and Australia*, pps.258-270. See also Julie Willis. "Conscious Design. The Melbourne University Architectural Atelier 1919-1947." *Fabrications*. vol.13: 2, May 2004. pps.43-62.

²⁰⁴ Robin Boyd. op. cit., pps.33-35.



Figure 2-24. Leighton Irwin. Prince Henry's Hospital, Melbourne, 1939. State Library of Victoria, No. a40868.

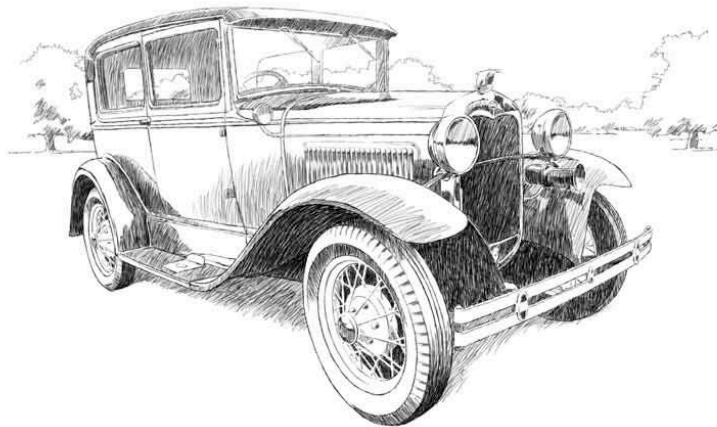


Figure 2-25. Ford Model A, 1930. Ford Motor Company, Detroit, Michigan, USA.

“Speed” also is a thing that we cannot ignore,” Irwin said. “[...] Our cars are fast, and everything industrial must be fast. Time is of all importance. [...] A good deal of this time-saving is accomplished by machinery, not merely in the case of those things of which I have spoken, but as applied to the ordinary household work; the vacuum cleaner and the various types of washing machines, the elevator and so on.”

He also spoke at length about the use of new construction materials such as architectural scale glass and concrete that he had seen during his travels:

Side by side with these more or less abstract influences on architecture [standardisation, speed, machine fabrication] are the influences wielded by the material ones, steel, concrete and glass. These things are all tremendously in evidence in the new buildings and particularly [...] the use of glass, for this at the present time is enormous and extraordinary, particularly in colder countries where they are endeavouring to get every possible amount of warmth and fresh air into their buildings.

Concrete in its plastic form surrounding steel has given us such opportunity that we seem to have even hardly begun to master its intricacies. [...] The synthetic covering is an extraordinarily interesting thing also. It is found almost impossible to use stone in ordinary modern commercial buildings because of the time it takes in quarrying, transport and so on, and in its place, even in the very highest type of buildings, we find such things as terra cotta and synthetic stone [precast masonry] being freely used.

Irwin concluded his address by taking the opportunity to speak out against city planning and building, particularly, Melbourne’s suburbs. “Think of our city,” he says, “of its drab uninteresting reflections of a mid-Victorian era, where the moment anything new appears varying a little from what has been, brings down the disapproval of fathers and a new regulation appears restricting any such future presumption. Think of our monotonous and far-flung suburbs with their never-ending streets each the same as the last, and the houses themselves so smug and uncomfortable. How long will it take us to realise the impossibility continuous encroachment on the countryside and difficulty of providing in the streets laid down the necessary facilities for transport?”

Irwin’s modernism at the Atelier was a reaction against historicism and early 20th century residential design and planning, while fully supportive of standardisation and the adaptation of industrial processes for architecture and anxious to explore the newer construction materials of reinforced concrete and glass. His 1930 Melbourne address summarised the emerging international modernism of the era that was to provide an architectural and a cultural setting for emerging modernists such as Baldwinson.

Manuscripts

While Baldwinson was studying at “The Gordon”, he formed friendships amongst the students that were to last a lifetime. Outside of the classroom, he also began an association with H. (Harry) Tatlock Miller (1913-1989), his bookshop and his Geelong-edited and published journal, *Manuscripts* in 1929.²⁰⁵

Tatlock Miller was born in Hamilton, Victoria where his father was a stock and station agent. He had attended Geelong Grammar as a boarder and opened the Book Nook in 1931 and began producing *Manuscripts* in his first year in Ryrie Street, Geelong. Tatlock Miller was well integrated into the Melbourne cultural scene and Theodore Fink, a prominent supporter of modernist ideals, enthusiastically reviewed the journal. The publisher was also well acquainted with the well-known Melbourne bookseller Ms Elsie Champion, Booklovers Bookshop, Collins Street.²⁰⁶

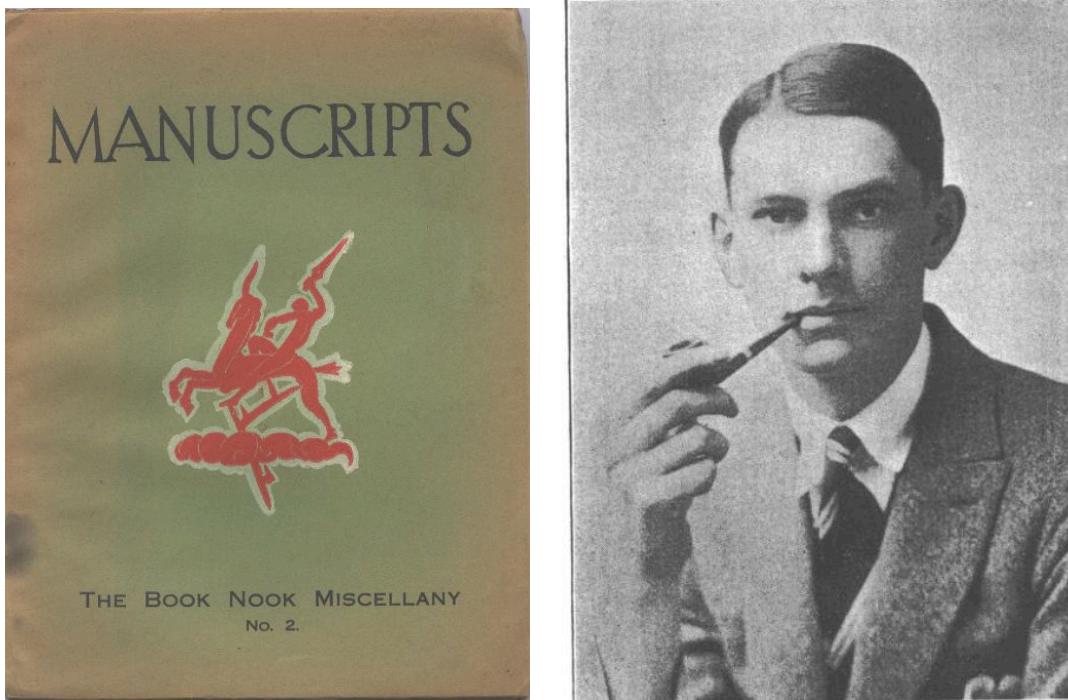


Figure 2-26. *Manuscripts*. No. 2, 1932 (left) H. Tatlock Miller, editor of the journal (right) in *Desiderata*. No. 13, August 1932, p.19.

The first issue of the journal in 1931 features an emblem of St George and the Dragon in a somewhat Moderne style on the cover designed by Baldwinson. Internal illustrations in the form of woodcuts/linocuts were to follow. *Manuscripts* was the most intensely modernist Australian journal of the early 1930s and published 13 issues between 1931-1935. This

²⁰⁵ Miller was also known as H.T. Miller, Harry Miller and Tatlock Miller at various stages in his career.

²⁰⁶ Laurel Clark. “Harry Tatlock Miller. Man of Miscellany.” *Investigator*, Geelong Historical Society, June 1990, pps.77-81.

association with *Manuscripts* provided Baldwinson's most direct introduction to modernism before his travel to Britain.

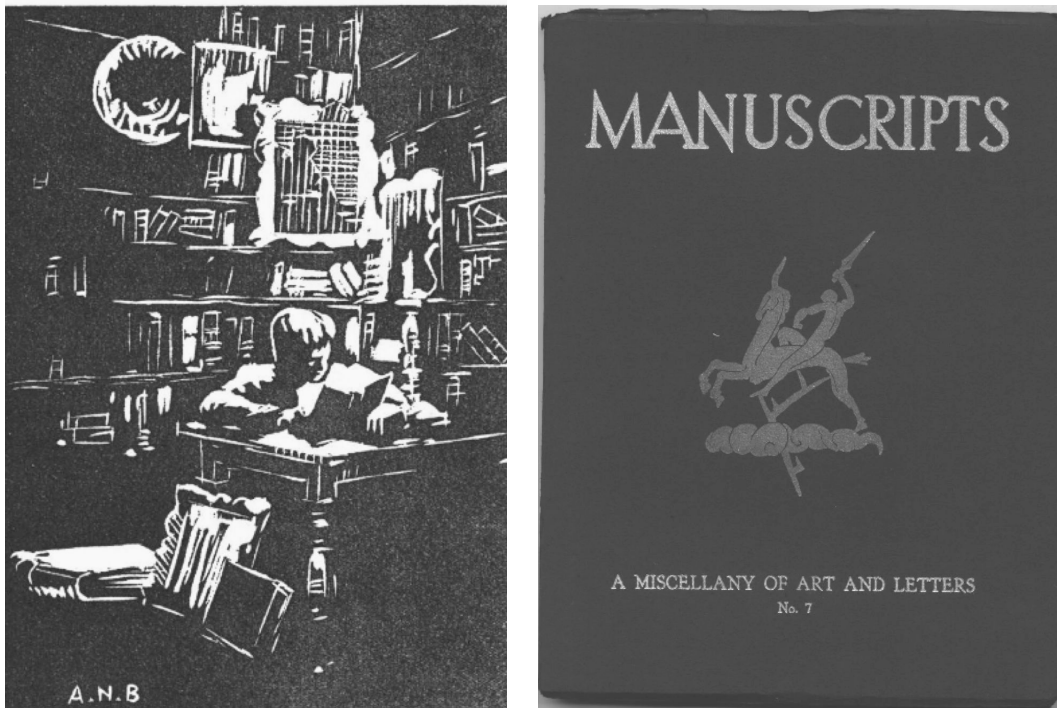


Figure 2-27. Arthur Baldwinson. “The Book Nook. An Impression,” 1931. Linocut. (left), *Manuscripts*, No. 7, 1933 (right).

During *Manuscripts*' five-year life, it employed Best Overend as architectural editor, featured articles by the painter and teacher George Bell, the painters Sam Atyeo (also a furniture designer) and Eric Thake and printed intaglio prints by Margaret Preston, Marjorie Wood, Dorrit Black and Baldwinson and featured many other notable members of Australia's community of artists and intellectuals.²⁰⁷

The Book Nook was also the centre of a Geelong “salon” composed of Tatlock Miller, Baldwinson, Arthur Collins, the artists Marjory Cook and Ola Cohen and probably others.²⁰⁸ Baldwinson, Cook and others were members of a book club known as the “Bloody Little Rosebuds” that frequently met at the Book Nook.²⁰⁹

Tatlock Miller gives a florid account of how Baldwinson became involved in *Manuscripts* in a “Proem” in the introduction to the first edition of *Manuscripts*.

²⁰⁷ *Manuscripts* was published from Tatlock Miller's bookshop and gallery, at 105a Ryrie Street, Geelong. The Book Nook also featured “The Very Little Gallery” exhibiting works by Baldwinson, Lionel Lindsay, Harold Herbert (including etchings, oils, watercolours) and bookplates by Ernest Warner. These exhibitors are drawn from listings in issues of *Manuscripts*. In 2005, this masonry building was still standing.

²⁰⁸ Information supplied by Chris Wood of Melbourne, a descendent of a family intimately associated with H. Tatlock Miller. Interview 22 April 2006 and correspondence with Chris Wood, 23 June 2006.

²⁰⁹ Interview 22 April 2006 and correspondence with Chris Wood, 23 June 2006.

Once upon a time, there was a proprietor of one of the smallest bookshops in the world, who was very young, ambitious, hopeful and full of faith, like all young men.[...]

One wintry evening, just at dusk, when the streetlights had been lit and were shining through a misty rain, the young man was sitting with an artist before a warm fire, reading a poem he had written. The dark was creeping into the rooms but was held at bay by the firelight. He lent forward so he could speak more softly. When he had finished, this artist [Baldwinson], who was one of the kindest artists in the world, promised to illustrate it ... he was very happy.

And so came the first lino-cut, the forerunner of many others, an etching and a cover design—all specially done for the decorating of MANUSCRIPTS. Who reads would have the original work of several well known artists.²¹⁰

In the second volume of *Manuscripts* appearing in 1932, Tatlock Miller dedicated a poem to A.N.B. as the frontispiece. This issue includes an endpiece of a full page linocut by Baldwinson, titled “The Book Nook, an Impression”.

For A.N.B

Vitae dimidium meae

*Perhaps when you're alone and sitting by the fire,
You'll read these works, and slowly turn each page until
The last word's said. Then in the following silence that
Must always come, when book is read and fire burns low,
And clock chimes some late hour and says all other men
Find sleep – you'll quietly walk across the room, unlock
The window-latch, and lean upon the bar, and smoke
Your pipe, and dream a little sadly with the stars,
Knowing one brought to you that night, an offering
Whose secret springs were in the dreams you shared.*

Figure 2-27. H. Tatlock Miller, “For A.N.B.” *Manuscripts*, vol. 2, 1931. Facsimile.

Baldwinson produced artwork for *Manuscripts* from the first edition and continued his association from London with a brief in-transit omission. Tatlock Miller proved to be an influential friend with many connections in the Australian art world and later in the English

²¹⁰ *Manuscripts*, vol. 1, 1931. This edition also contains a tipped-in linocut by Baldwinson, “The Book Nook - An Impression”.

art world, when he became a Director of the Redfern Gallery, London.²¹¹ The Redfern Gallery later provided Sidney Nolan with his first British show.

With the last edition of *Manuscripts* in 1935, Tatlock Miller closed his bookshop and began writing for Melbourne's *Herald* from an address at 1 Collins Street, Melbourne.²¹² In 1936, he met the stage designer Loudon Sainthill during the season of the *Ballet Russe* Australian tour. Tatlock Miller then lived in South Yarra with his sister Kath and Sainthill left his home and moved into the South Yarra house. This began a relationship with Tatlock Miller that continued until Sainthill's death in England in 1969.²¹³



Figure 2-28. Marjorie Wood. Pencil sketch of Arthur Baldwinson, 1926-27. Chris Wood Collection, Melbourne.

It is unclear if Baldwinson continued this relationship with Tatlock Miller as no direct references to him appear in the Baldwinson papers. The continually updated addresses for

²¹¹ The notable Australian collector Rex Nan Kivell who donated an extensive art collection to the National Library of Australia was also a Director of the gallery.

²¹² Basil Burdett, former Associate Editor of *Art and Australia* and the art critic for the Melbourne *Herald*, also lived in this building.

²¹³ Sainthill's career is summarised in Loudon Sainthill, H.T. Miller, editor. London, 1973. "Biographic Notes", pps. 57-60 and *Loudon Sainthill 1919-1969*. Westpac Gallery, Melbourne, 1991.

Tatlock Miller that appear throughout the Baldwinson address diaries suggest that they remained in touch. Although Tatlock Miller and Sainthill left for London in 1939, the couple later returned and took up residence at *Merioola*, a notable and somewhat disreputable artists' colony in Sydney's eastern suburbs.²¹⁴ Tatlock Miller, who later wrote for the *Sun*, *PIX*, *Australian National Journal*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Home*, also served on the NSW Sulman Prize jury for 1947.²¹⁵

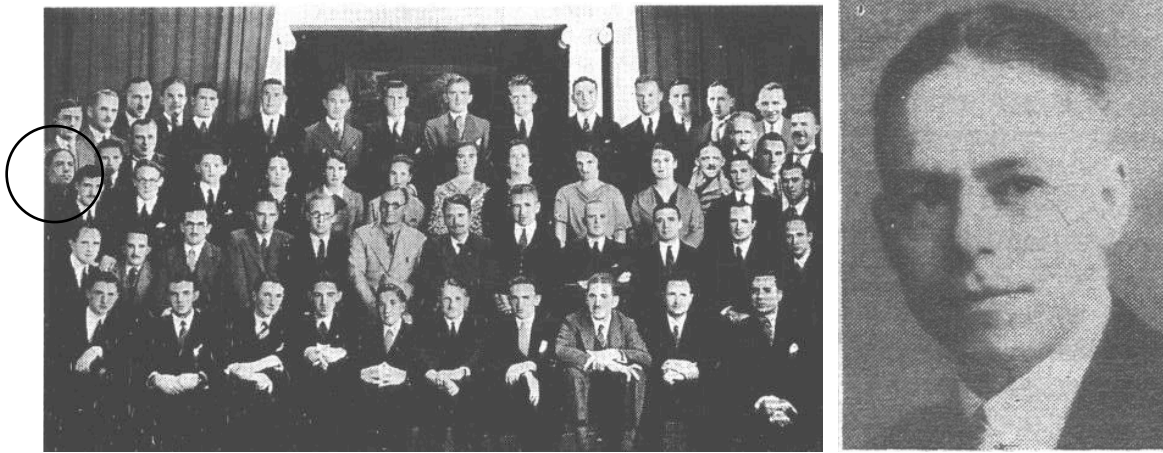


Figure 2-29. Baldwinson's image has been pasted into the 1934 Architecture group photograph at the Gordon Institute of Technology. Gordon group photograph from Long, op. cit., p. 276. Arthur Baldwinson, 1932, unidentified newspaper cutting. (right) Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, 1548/69 Box 4 (5).

OVERSEAS

By 1931-32, Baldwinson announced his plans to travel. It was reported that he had an interest in attending the *École des Beaux Arts*, Paris.²¹⁶ Letters of introduction for Baldwinson from Leslie Perrot addressed to McKim Mead and White in New York also suggest provisional stopover plans in the United States.²¹⁷ But first he had to face the 1932 RVIA examinations.²¹⁸ Not unexpectedly, Baldwinson passed the Board of Architects examination for registration and membership and his personal résumé notes that he became an Associate of the RVIA in 1932.

²¹⁴ Baldwinson performed architectural works at Merioola for J. Kemeny in 1957. Baldwinson papers, Job No. 390 in PXD 356. ff.1840-41.

²¹⁵ *Architecture*, April 1948, p.25.

²¹⁶ *Journal of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects*, Vol. XXVII, p.40.

²¹⁷ Holman, op. cit., p.22 and p.25. While an interest in the historicist work of McKim Mead and White may seem surprising, Baldwinson's student work and prize-winning design drawings drew from period models.

²¹⁸ There were nine subjects in the 1932 examinations: History of Architecture; Mouldings, features and ornament; Geometric and Perspective Drawing; Shoring and underpinning, drainage, ventilation, heating, lighting and water supply; Materials; Principles of Practice; Drawing and Designing; Specifications and Professional Practice.



Figure 2-30. McKim Mead and White. New York Racquet Club, 1916-1919.
www.greatbuildings.com. 24 October 2006.

His imminent departure after four years of study and two years of successful teaching at the Gordon was an emotional moment in Geelong. The *Geelong Advertiser* covered the event extensively in “Farewell to Graduates”.²¹⁹ A small excerpt from the *Advertiser’s* feature article gave a sense of the occasion:

The departure of two distinguished young architectural graduates from Geelong for experience in England and on the continent was made the occasion of a valedictory social in the Davidson Hall at the Gordon Institute, the two guests being Mr Marcus Norris [his family in attendance] and Mr A.N. Baldwinson [his father in attendance]. Representatives from the Gordon Art Club, the T-Square club, the Principal G.R. King, local architects and the Master Builders Association [were present].

Baldwinson and Marcus Norris sailed for England on the *Largs Bay* soon after this valedictory reception.²²⁰ Baldwinson’s travel diary contained the addresses of his many friends and included the particulars of the British Architectural Association, a letter of introduction to the Secretary of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) as well as contacts at the notoriously ribald Savage Club, London.²²¹

²¹⁹“Farewell to Graduates.” *Geelong Advertiser*, 7 March 1932.

²²⁰ Norris later became a principal of the prominent Melbourne architectural firm Norris, Marcus & Allison.

²²¹ Holman, op. cit., p. 25 records a letter of introduction to RIBA. The Melbourne Savage Club had an equally colourful reputation. Melbourne’s Savage Club may have supplied this introduction. Arthur Baldwinson, address diary, 1932. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792.

INTRODUCTION

Baldwinson arrived in London in 1932 with Gordon architectural training, RVIA certification, two years of teaching experience and highly developed drawing and visualisation skills. He had not travelled outside of Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria and his direct exposure to modernism was limited to Melbourne's Moderne (Boyd's Jazz Age) style. As a Gordon instructor, however, he had access to their library of the latest British architectural journals and he would have been aware of the earliest stirrings of British modernism in the late 1920s through the pages of *The Architectural Review*.

In London, he is fortunate to work in practices that employ many of Britain's most able modernist architects such as Wells Coates, Raymond McGrath, Serge Chermayeff, Maxwell Fry and finally Walter Gropius. These architects were well integrated into the British architectural milieu with especially close contacts with *The Architectural Review*.

Baldwinson was soon transformed from a Gordon-trained architect with a vocabulary of historical styles into a modernist architect who became fluent in the forms and ideals of this early modernist era. The speculative Baldwinson drawings that survive from this period clearly show that he jettisons the historicist models and takes up British modernist designs. Baldwinson's personal drawing style is also transformed from an atmospheric figurative style into a more expressionist method of sketching and rendering.

In the early 1930s, the English architecture and design profession was energised by the direct intervention of the British government into the promotion of modernist design and architecture. This involvement was closely followed (and supported) by the architectural press, notably *The Architectural Review*. This led to the creation and support of agencies such as Design and Industries Association (DIA) and the Modern Architecture Research Group (MARS). Baldwinson was present during the creation of the innovative organizations and returned to Australia with the intent to import these innovations.

Baldwinson returns to Australia with first-hand experience in British modernist architecture of the interwar period and a foundation in the materials and methods of modernist design and construction. He will use his British and limited international experience as the foundation for the synthesis of an architectural model that ultimately embraces a regional consciousness.

WHAT WAS EUROPEAN MODERNISM IN THE 1930s?

Christopher Wilk's authoritative introduction to the 2005 Victoria and Albert Museum's exhibition catalogue, *Modernism. 1914-1939* is amongst the more recent reviews of the work-in-progress study of early 20th century modernism. Wilk observes that modernism is not a style but a collection of ideologies, individuals and groups that embraced the "New": that is, new architecture, new products and new social patterns. Assessing the social and political turmoil of the early European modernist era, Wilk suggests that there was a subliminal "left" belief in the value of a centralised economy where "scientific" decision-making led to social efficiencies. All traditions in design, architecture and society were suspect and subject to challenge by the "New". There was a near-messianic belief in the

modern world of the machine, manufacturing and standardised mass production for consumer goods as well as architecture. It is possible to isolate three essential elements of the European modernist architecture that Baldwinson encountered in London in 1932.

1. Materials and Methods. Modernism in the European buildings of the early decades of the 20th century is generally associated with structures that employed new materials such as reinforced concrete; laminated timbers; innovative glass products such as new ranges of coloured glass, reinforced glass, and Pilkington UV-transmitting Vita glass; metal alloys such as Monel®, stainless steel and architectural bronze as well as inventive engineering construction techniques. Manufactured materials in building were preferred over handcrafted elements. As he recalled his experience in the 1930s, Baldwinson was immersed in these methods and materials:

*On visiting England and Europe in 1932 I had my first experience of the New Architecture and quickly came to realise that the methods of adapting antique architecture to present day building types, changed social ways, new structural inventions and machine production was superficial in the extreme and only ended in futility. It was the structural engineers who were producing vital work; their outlook was not prejudiced by past methods; they had no inhibitions to hinder their frank and complete use of new structural inventions such as steel and reinforced concrete.*²²²

2. Aesthetics. New materials served new aesthetic purposes. They were employed in architectural design and construction that studiously avoided direct references to historical styles and period decorations. In addition, machine technology and modular construction for architecture did not lend itself to figurative ornament and decoration. The modernist aesthetic favoured more abstract principles. As Arthur Baldwinson explains his 1932 development in a mid-20th century lecture:

Regarding aesthetics [...] I am extremely interested in the arrangement of volume. I used to be mostly interested in the composition of mass, but lately I am finding great interest in the composition of planes in the contrast in direction and in the forming of spatial effects with simple plane surfaces. Ideas of exploded mass with solid opaque planes connected with, but visually separated with transparent glass places. And the extension of plane surfaces into space.

This is a new aesthetic experiment made possible with present day construction techniques. These planes, such as ceilings and walls are sometimes given special significance by having individual textures or colours. Effective contrast is made with a large area of glass together with a coarse texture stone wall. The sheen and delicacy of glass is in extreme contrast to the weight and brutality of rough stone.

3. Social Innovation. In the early decades of the 20th century, the new aesthetics and materials were employed for the use and pleasure of a modern society where there was a degree of dissatisfaction with the traditions of “the way things were”. This 20th century modernism

²²² Arthur Baldwinson. “My Aesthetics.” Address to the Society of Sculptors and Associates, 9 May 1952. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792.

was optimistic that design and building could create a “new” and better world. Within this modernist belief in “improvement”, there was a sense of an internationalism of “extra-territorial” values that were shared by modernist European societies. These beliefs are shared by Baldwinson:

Our present day way of life is of tremendous importance and to the architects who are aware of this pioneer development through their architecture. It comes natural for me to design for free and informal living condition[s]. Today there is little importance given to social distinctions and formality in personal relationships. [L]abour saving equipment and convenient planning are essential.

The Architectural Review & British Modernism

This prestigious journal’s coverage of the British modern architectural movement was an indication of the acceptance of modernism amongst Britain’s more advanced architectural practitioners. Since the first issue appeared in 1896, the editors and writers for *The Architectural Review (AR)* published by The Architectural Press had long held an ecumenical view of architecture; surveys of Asian temple architecture could be readily found adjacent to features on English country houses. Their sister publication, *The Architect’s Journal*, concerned itself with more professional and technical issues.

In their European travels, *The Architectural Review’s (AR)* editorial staff began to sense unusual changes in contemporary continental architecture in the first quarter of the 20th century. They investigated and documented those early shifts and by the time Baldwinson arrived in London in 1932, the journal had become one of the most aggressive supporters of modernist architecture. Amongst their anointed innovators was Raymond McGrath, Baldwinson’s first London employer.

In the mid-1920s, the *Review* (nicknamed the “Archie Rev” by its supporters) was providing its traditional coverage of the Edwardian period revival styles supplemented with historical features on a wide range of architectural topics. Occasional glimpses across the English Channel noted such items as Swedish design and Saarinen’s civic commission for the Helsinki Railway Station.²²³ Coverage of France and Germany was thin. Although Walter Gropius had published extensively on the Bauhaus from 1923 to 1925 and Le Corbusier’s *Vers une Architecture* had appeared in 1923, lack of English language translations in the mid-1920s filtered out much of the general discussion of continental modernism.²²⁴

²²³ “Architecture of Finland.” *The Architectural Review (AR)*, vol. 57, January-June 1925.

²²⁴ Gropius’s compilation, *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus* appeared in 1935 in an English translation by P.M. Shand, one of *AR*’s most significant writers. Le Corbusier’s re-titled *Toward a New Architecture* appears in an English translation by the artist Frederick Etchells in 1927.



Figure 3-1. Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret. Detail, La Roche House (Maison La Roche), Paris, 1923.

Following the critical success of Le Corbusier's *Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau* in the 1925 *Exposition des Arts Décoratifs*, the December 1926 issue of the *Review* illustrated Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret's 1923 La Roche House (Maison La Roche) in a Paris suburb in a feature titled "Modern Movement in Continental Decoration IV".²²⁵ The writer "Silhouette" described "...an apartment of noble proportions with plain white walls, utterly devoid of ornament. [...] Time alone will tell if rooms of this character will prove entirely satisfactory and liveable, but as expressions of a new spirit in architecture and decoration, they undoubtedly open fresh avenues for thought and *may be the precursors of the architecture of the future* [italics added]."

The Le Corbusier article in *AR* immediately attracted the attention of Howard Robertson, the Principal of London's Architectural Association (AA), who responded to the topic of the "architecture of the future" in the following year with a generously illustrated Le Corbusier five page feature in the *AR* on the Maison La Roche, Villa Vaucresson and the Ozenfant

²²⁵ "Silhouette." [pseudonym] *AR*, vol. 59, 1926, p.123.

studio.²²⁶ Robertson, who was to marry Doris Lewis, a registered Sydney architect (and later RIBA Gold Medal winner), was an enthusiastic supporter of the modernist movement within the AA.²²⁷ Robertson's essay describes the La Roche House and isolates some of the principal themes of continental modernism drawing from the Le Corbusier's as-yet untranslated *Vers une Architecture* (1923):

Le Corbusier: "The Plan is the Generator."²²⁸ *The recognition of the plan as the essence of architectural feeling, of the importance of geometry as the constituent of volume and its envelope of surface and of the value of the play of light on simple primary forms are elements of his [Le Corbusier's] design theory.*

Le Corbusier: "Standards are a matter of logic."²²⁹ *The principle of standisation is all-important, for in fact, it is tending toward the elimination of various trades on the actual job.*

Le Corbusier: "Architecture or Revolution."²³⁰ *Such architecture is at least open to [social] progress and improvement, both in design and method of construction. It is trying to answer the needs of the day [...].*²³¹

By 1927, the architect and artist Frederick Etchell's translation of Le Corbusier's *Vers une Architecture* had appeared as *Toward a New Architecture* published by The Architectural Press, publishers of *AR*. The *AR* reviewer P.M. Stratton in a 1928 feature, "The Line from France," prominently placed on page 1 explained that "The French modernists have made so great an impression in England with their new impulse that there must surely have been room for their ideas. [...] Le Corbusier's book in Mr Etchell's [sic] spirited translation has raised a storm."²³²

The recently appointed *AR* editor Hubert de Cronin Hasting (known as "H de C" to staff writers) further editorialised about the importance of Le Corbusier with an image of the Maison La Roche commission.²³³ The bi-lingual *AR* staff writer P. Morton Shand also translated a fragment of a Le Corbusier's essay on urban planning under the title of "The Town and the House".²³⁴ *The Architectural Review* activity in 1927-28 identifies 1928 as the breakthrough year for architectural modernism in Britain. The Sydney University-educated Australian architect Raymond McGrath was to be the *AR*'s next discovery.

²²⁶ *AR*. vol 61, 1927, pps.2-7. Alan Powers describes Robertson as "... the most effective journalist in bringing Modernism in front of British architects in the second half of the 1920s...". *Britain. Modern Architectures in History*. Reaktion Books, 2007, pps.34-35.

²²⁷ The Easton & Robertson practice later designed the Australian Pavilion for the 1939 New York World's Fair where Stephenson & Turner had the commission for the interiors.

²²⁸ Le Corbusier. *Vers une Architecture*, translated by Frederick Etchells as *Toward a New Architecture*, 1927, p.8.

²²⁹ *ibid.*, p.10.

²³⁰ *ibid.*, p.14.

²³¹ *AR*. vol. 61, 1927, p.4

²³² *AR*, vol. 68, 1928, p.1.

²³³ Le Corbusier. *Vers une Architecture*, translated by Frederick Etchells as *Toward a New Architecture*, 1927, p.222.

²³⁴ *ibid.*, pps.223-230.

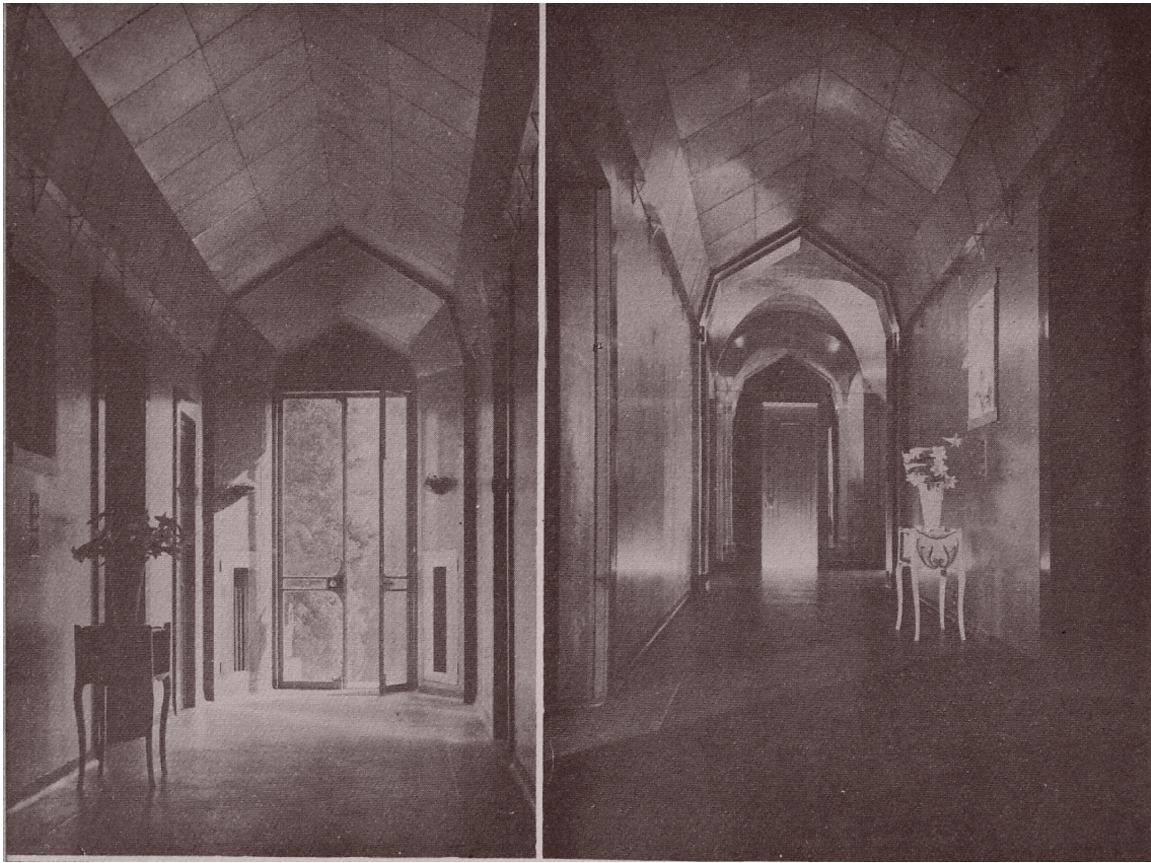


Figure 3-2. Raymond McGrath. *Finella*, 1928-29. Illustrations of *Finella*'s vaulted and foil-lined entrance halls. Raymond McGrath. *Twentieth Century Houses*, 1934. Figure 10.

As Baldwinson was finishing his final year at the Gordon in 1929, Raymond McGrath's *Finella* project was being published in a generous eight-page spread in the *AR*,²³⁵ "*Finella. A House for Mansfield Forbes*" with an unprecedented 15 photographs.²³⁶ McGrath's *Finella* work (1928-29) was the "modernising and decorating" of a mid-19th century Georgian Revival pile belonging to Mansfield Forbes, a British *bon vivant* of independent means.²³⁷

As McGrath's biographer observes, the interest in *Finella* was unprecedented with features appearing in *Ideal Home*, *Vogue*, *Good Housekeeping*, *The Home*, *The Studio*, *The Architect's Journal* and of course, *The Architectural Review*.²³⁸ As the *Review* observed, the significance of *Finella* is found in the use of 20th century materials such as plywood,

²³⁵ The history of the commission is analysed in Harry Margalit, "Raymond McGrath, Mansfield Forbes and *Finella*: an essay in delight in English modernism," in *Firm(ness) commodity DE-light. Questioning the Canons*. SAHANZ Papers. Julie Willis et al, editors, Melbourne, 1998, pps.225-231.

²³⁶ A.C. Frost. "Finella. A House for Mansfield Forbes." *AR*, vol.65, 1929, pps.264-272. Frost is McGrath's brother-in-law.

²³⁷ "modernising and decorating" is McGrath's description of the project. Donal O'Donovan. *God's Architect. A Life of Raymond McGrath*. 1994, p.85.

²³⁸ *ibid.*, pps.85-86.

aluminium and glass in unprecedented ways, rather than the modernist principles of the use of space.

The issue of materials was revisited in 1930 when *AR* commissioned McGrath for an article on “New Materials, New Methods” where he explored the use of architectural glass, aluminium cladding, Vitrolite pigmented glass, veneers, metal-faced plywood and artificial silk (rayon).²³⁹ Harry Margalit’s 1998 paper on Finella adds copper, Celotex, tinfoil (silverfoil) and Induroleum floorcovering to the Finella palette.²⁴⁰



Figure 3-3. Finella. Constructed ca. 1850. The lattice shutters and window treatments are the work of Raymond McGrath for his client Mansfield Forbes. Photo www.cambridge2000.com.

McGrath’s prominence in the prestige architectural press and the popular magazines continued with his prize-winning designs for a 1931 competition held by *The Architectural Review* for a speculative flat for a fictitious client Lord Benbow, 1932 commissions for two smart London venues, The Embassy Club and Fischer’s Restaurant and his major work for interiors at the BBC Headquarters at Portland Place.²⁴¹

²³⁹ Raymond McGrath. “New Materials, New Methods.” *AR*, vol.67, pps.272-280. The metal-faced plywood (“Plymax”) was refined by Jack Pritchard’s firm, Venesta and used extensively in Finella. Pritchard was a close friend of Maxwell Fry, Baldwinson’s second London employer.

²⁴⁰ Harry Margalit, op. cit., pps.226-227.

²⁴¹ “Competition.” The Lord Benbow competition is announced. *AR*, vol.66, 1930, p.281; Donal O’Donovan. op. cit., Embassy Club, pps.139-140. Also *AR*, vol.73, 1933, pps.70-73; Donal O’Donovan. op. cit., Fischer’s

As British designers and architects grew familiar with continental modernism in the early 1930s, other designers appeared amongst them, the émigrés Wells Coates (Canada) and Serge Chermayeff (Chechen Republic, Russia), and the British architect F.R.S. Yorke.²⁴² These three pioneering London modernist architects began to attract the attention of *AR* and by 1932, the emerging F.R.S. Yorke began to contribute to the journal with a survey of “Three New Houses”, new work by the Middle European architect Lois Welzenbacher for the Rosenbauer House.²⁴³



Figure 3-4. Raymond McGrath. Fischer's Restaurant, interior, 1932. Donal O'Donovan. *God's Architect. A Life of Raymond McGrath*, p.142.

By the end of 1932, *The Architectural Review* emerged as the pre-eminent promoter of British modernism. The journal was able to call on the most prestigious architectural writers of the 1930s to support the cause. As an emblem of their faith, the journal that had through the 1920s lent support to the traditional red brick and regional stonework styles of the Edwardian era produced a November 1932 issue devoted entirely to concrete and steel construction.

Restaurant, pps.143-144; Donal O'Donovan. op. cit., BBC, pps.123-132. The BBC commission was covered in depth in *AR*, vol.72, pps.57-78.

²⁴² “Cresta.” Wells Coates’ 1931 modernisation of the Cresta silk retailers. *AR*, vol.71, 1932, pps.48-49. See also www.designmuseum.org/design/wells-coates. 1 November 2006.

²⁴³ F.R.S. Yorke. “Three New Houses.” *AR*, vol.71, 1932, pps.56-58.

The “Concrete and Steel” issue features High and Over attributed entirely to Amyas Connell (p.211), McGrath’s Rudderbar house for an aviatrix (p.209), the Welzenbacher house promoted earlier by Yorke (p.213) and drawings of a project by Serge Chermayeff (pps.214-215). The British popular publishing industry, BBC wireless talks and the architectural journals further encouraged enthusiasm for modernism in architecture.²⁴⁴ The *AR*’s conversion was now complete.

Fully committed to modernism, the *AR* provided consistent coverage to the work of Raymond McGrath; Alvar Aalto who made his first appearance in the *AR* in 1933 (vol.74) with a review of a Finnish furniture show at Fortnum and Mason and coverage of his Paimio Tuberculosis Sanatorium; new work by the Dutch architect J.P.P Oud, Mies van der Rohe, Connell, Ward and Lucas and many others. The *AR* and their publisher The Architectural Press helped create an atmosphere where modernism thrived.

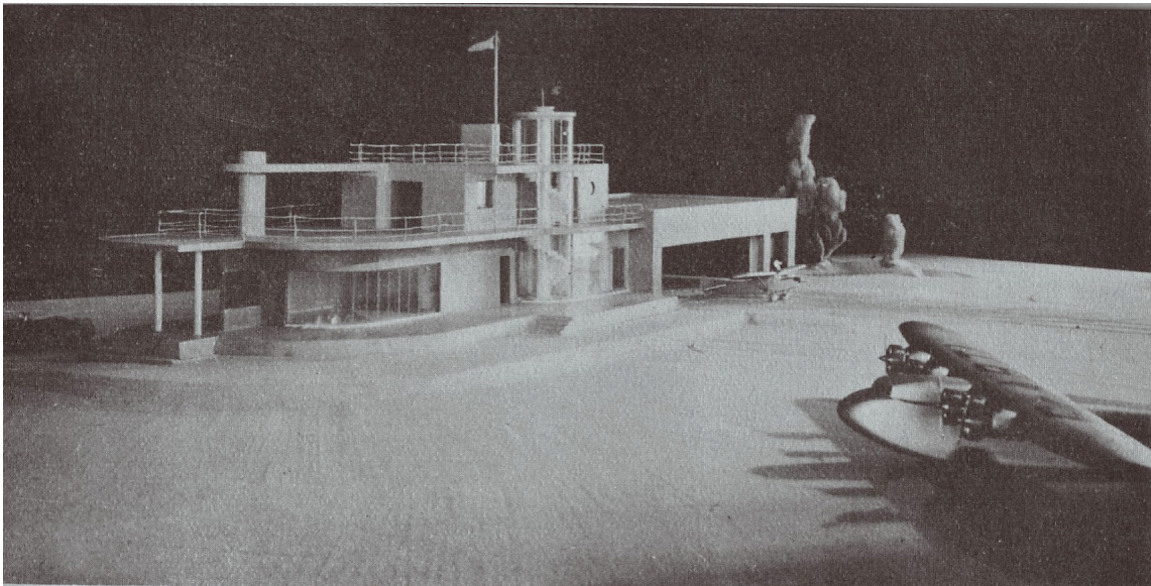


Figure 3-5. Raymond McGrath. Rudderbar airport project model (A House for an Aviatrix) 1932. Raymond McGrath, *Twentieth Century Houses*, 1934, figure 22.

Many of the journal’s young contributors went on to distinguished careers including John Summerson (Summerson later described the *AR* group as the “Hurricane Functionalists”²⁴⁵), Hugh Casson, P. Morton Shand, Evelyn Waugh, Osbert Lancaster and the poet, later British Poet Laureate, John Betjeman who joined as assistant editor in 1930-1933.²⁴⁶ Betjeman stayed with the “Archie Rev” until he resigned to write the well-known *Shell Architectural Guides* to Britain. Betjeman’s biographer, Bevis Hillier, asserts that *The Architectural*

²⁴⁴ Notable publishers in this field include Faber and Faber, The Left Book Club, Penguin and The Architectural Press, publishers of *The Architectural Review*.

²⁴⁵ Bevis Hillier, *The Young Betjeman*, John Murray, 1988, p.268.

²⁴⁶ Notably, Betjeman and Summerson met at an Alvar Aalto exhibition at Fortnum and Mason, London. *ibid.*, p.268.

Review office was the nerve centre for the Modern Movement in Britain.²⁴⁷ Betjeman, reminiscing about his experiences at the journal, said:

The new policy of The Architectural Review [...] was modern, as opposed to moderne. We didn't like Cubism [in architecture] but we liked what was pure and simple and Scandinavian like our editor [...]. There had already been a Swedish number of the Review [before 1930] and Finland was leaping to the fore with the work of Alvar Aalto introduced by P. Morton Shand and Jack (Plywood) Pritchard" [...] If anyone asked me who invented modern architecture, I answer [the editor] Hastings [and The Architectural Review].²⁴⁸

The Good Design Movement in England

As Baldwinson arrived in Britain, the government released the Gorrell Report. The report called for British public education in all phases of design through government-supported exhibitions and other strategies. In July 1931, the British Board of Trade had appointed a Committee under the chairmanship of Lord Gorrell with the following terms of reference:

To investigate and advise with regard to the following:

- *The desirability of forming in London a standing exhibition of articles of everyday use and good design of current manufacture, and of forming exhibitions of the same kind;*
- *The desirability of organising local or travelling exhibitions of the same kind at home or abroad;*
- *The constitution of the central body which should be charged with the work of coordinating the above activities;*
- *The amount of expenditure involved and the sources from which it should be provided.*

These British developments were to have major reverberations in Australia on Baldwinson's return. The findings of the Gorrell Report were published and exhaustively discussed in the British architecture and design press, and most notably in Herbert Read's classic *Art and Industry* and the pages of *The Architectural Review*.²⁴⁹ Read illustrated his Faber & Faber publication with industrial design work by Baldwinson's new colleagues Raymond McGrath, Wells Coates, Serge Chermayeff and others.

The Gorell Report and the generous British government funding that followed it helped underwrite a renaissance in the British dialogue about design. Julian Holder's essay "Design in Everyday Things. Promoting Modernism in Britain 1912-1944" summarises many of the publications and programmes of this remarkable era.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p.250.

²⁴⁸ *ibid.*, pps.259-260, p.269, fn.97 (see also *The Architectural Review*, February 1974, p.120.)

²⁴⁹ Herbert Read. *Art and Industry*. Faber and Faber, London, 1934 and its companion volume *Art and Society*. Faber and Faber, London, 1936. The Gorrell Report appears as an appendix in the first edition of *Art and Industry*. John Betjeman writes on the Gorrell Report in *The Architectural Review*, vol.72, 1932, p.13.

²⁵⁰ Julian Holder. "Design in Everyday Things. Promoting Modernism in Britain 1912-1944." in *Modernism in Design*, Paul Greenhalgh, editor. Reaktion Books, London, 1990.



Figure 3-6. *Design in Everyday Things*. BBC (left) 1937. (BBC cover design by Raymond McGrath). *Design in Everyday Things*. ABC (right), 1941. The ABC cover design was by Alistair Morrison, later a client of Arthur Baldwinson.

The historian John Gloag established the inclusive 20th century pattern (integrating architecture, industrial design, interior design) for “Design” when he edited the Design and Industry Association’s (DIA) yearbook for 1926-27 under the title “Design in Everyday Life and Things”. In the spring of 1930, the BBC began to develop a series of radio talks that included *Today and Tomorrow in Architecture*. These talks were supported by pamphlets as well as through the BBC’s new periodical, *The Listener*.²⁵¹

These wireless talks were followed by a second BBC series in 1933, *Design in Modern Life*, including authorities such as John Gloag, Elizabeth Denby (on her work with Maxwell Fry’s Kensal House), Frank Pick, A.B. Read, Wells Coates and Robert Atkinson (also associated with Kensal House). By 1934, *Design in Industry* was scheduled for BBC talks.

Coinciding with Baldwinson’s London experiences, in 1936-37, the design of *Everyday Things* had become a BBC talks topic as well as an exhibition at the Royal Institute of British Architects; the BBC’s “Everyday Things” supported the public discussion. “Everyday Things” was also supported by *The Listener*, integrated into a Design and Industries

²⁵¹ *ibid.*, p.132.

Association conference and independently published as a pamphlet.²⁵² 1938. This series and earlier talks were later assembled as a Pelican paperback title called *Design*, edited by Anthony Bertram.

Baldwinson was to take careful note of these broadcasting and publishing innovations during his London residence and when he returned to Australia in five years later, he set about transplanting British models of design education.

Baldwinson in London

In the midst of the excitement about modernism in architecture as well as design, Arthur Baldwinson arrived in London in April 1932. A later interview with his Bedford Place flatmate Rae Featherstone explains that Arthur was "...keen for us to leave Bedford Place and share a flat at Tecton's High Point I (1933-35), Hampstead Heath."²⁵³ This medium density apartment building designed by Berthold Lubetkin and his Tecton associates was under construction and is considered one of early 1930s Britain's most innovative medium density modernist buildings.²⁵⁴ This Tecton building was also a destination for the young Frederick Romberg when he visited London as a Swiss architecture student five years later.²⁵⁵

For his first three months in London, Baldwinson supplemented his funds with free-lance illustration work until he found a position in Raymond McGrath's office in August 1932.²⁵⁶ The salary was £3.15/0 per week.²⁵⁷ Holman suggests that fellow Victorian architect Best Overend (b.1909) who was employed by Wells Coates at the time played a role in the introductions. Goad has identified Overend's return to Melbourne as March 1933.²⁵⁸ Overend later formed an association with H. Tatlock Miller's *Manuscripts*, perhaps referred by Baldwinson, where Overend is listed as architecture editor by 1935.²⁵⁹

²⁵² *ibid.*, p.133.

²⁵³ Holman, *op cit.*, p.31

²⁵⁴ Published in *AR*, vol.77, 1935.

²⁵⁵ Harriet Edquist. *Frederick Romberg. The Architecture of Migration 1938-1975*. RMIT University Press, 2000, p.15. Romberg, of course, later immigrated to Australia in 1938.

²⁵⁶ *ibid.*, pps.31-32. The commissioned illustrations from this period are poorly documented in the Baldwinson papers.

²⁵⁷ Arthur Baldwinson diary entry, 22 April 1934. Baldwinson Diaries, MLMSS 7792.

²⁵⁸ Overend trained in architecture at Swinburne Technical College and the Melbourne University architectural atelier. Philip Goad. "Best Overend. Pioneer Modernist." *Fabrications*. No. 6, 1995, pps.101-104.

²⁵⁹ *Manuscripts*. No. 12, 1935.



Figure 3-7. Baldwinson's preferred address. Berthold Lubetkin and Tecton. High Point I, London, 1933-35. *Modern Architecture in England*, Figure 54, Museum of Modern Art, NY, 1937. (Original image from *The Architectural Review*.)

Baldwinson and Raymond McGrath's Practice

Raymond McGrath (1903-1977) had arrived in London from Sydney in 1926 and slowly expanded a circle of acquaintances into a substantial network of friends. It was during McGrath's exploratory period that he met Mansfield Forbes who became his patron and first architectural client for the remodelling of Finella. McGrath's biographer Donal O'Donovan describes the exhilarating social setting that brought McGrath into the orbit of such figures as the writer Siegfried Sassoon, the modernist architect and later, author F.R.S. Yorke, Maxwell Fry, the artist and designer Paul Nash and many others.²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ Yorke was also a Marcel Breuer partner from 1935-37.

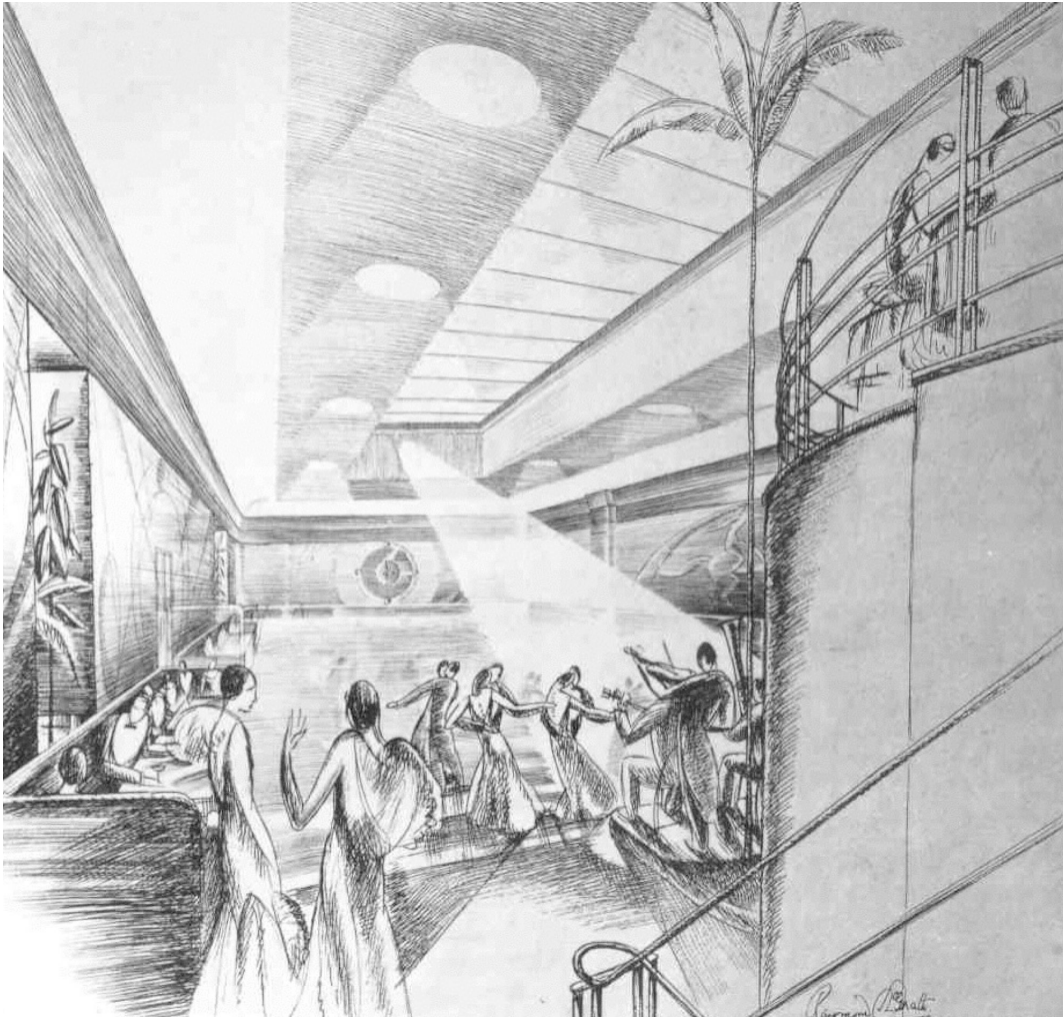


Figure 3-8. Raymond McGrath. *The Embassy Club*, 1932. Victoria and Albert Museum. Donal O'Donovan, *God's Architect*, p.140.

The 27-year old McGrath's significant circle of influence, the Mansfield Forbes patronage, the undeniable decorative accomplishment of Finella and McGrath's substantial portfolio of drawings, paintings and design work won him a contract for the position of "Decoration Consultant" (interior design) for the BBC building at Portland Place in 1930.²⁶¹ This commission lasted for two years. Unfortunately very little of the Portland Place interiors survives.²⁶²

When Baldwinson first joined the practice at 38 Conduit Street, London, McGrath was occupied with interior design commissions for two gathering places for smart young Londoners, the Embassy Club and Fischer's Restaurant. Baldwinson's papers include some

²⁶¹ Donal O'Donovan. op. cit., pps.126-127. The "Decoration Consultant" role is described by McGrath's biographer as that of a team-leader for the interior design work.

²⁶² The entrance hall, clocks and door furniture are said to survive. "Ladies and Gentlemen. Welcome to Broadcast House." *The Independent International*. 5-11 November, 1997, p.22.

drawings for the interiors of Fischer's Restaurant demonstrating that he played a role in the visualisation.²⁶³ Although McGrath was working on the BBC interiors, the absence of drawings in Baldwinson's papers suggests that he had little direct involvement in this work.²⁶⁴

McGrath coordinated a team for his BBC project that included Serge Chermayeff, Wells Coates and Dorothy Warren.²⁶⁵ When Baldwinson went to work with McGrath, he also joined three other Australian architects in the practice, Fred Manderson, Paul Goodesmith and Best Overend.²⁶⁶ Fred Manderson had worked directly with McGrath on Finella.²⁶⁷ Roy Grounds also found work with McGrath in the late 1930s.²⁶⁸ Philip Goad's assessment of Overend's career reveals that Overend and Baldwinson were, at times, involved in similar projects for the design and fabrication firm Venesta.²⁶⁹ "Baldwinson was," Allan Gamble, a McGrath Associate said, "quite skilled as an artist."²⁷⁰ Exhibitions, trade displays and continuing BBC work in London (and later Manchester) kept McGrath's studio active through 1934.²⁷¹

Despite the frantic pace at Raymond McGrath's, Baldwinson also remained active outside of the practice through freelance commercial work and competitions. An entry in his incomplete 1934 diary records:

*Sent in a design for the granite façade competition, façade of an electrical department and showrooms. Received honourable mention (112 entries). The critic Lance [?] Gill was not in sympathy with my work and gave it a bad crit. However, he was quite wrong as I knew that my design was the best and in the true spirit of modern architecture.*²⁷² [His emphasis].

Despite his fame, McGrath received very few residential commissions and Baldwinson's papers suggest that he played no role in them. Two designs from Baldwinson's period in London, however, had a notable impact in the profession. McGrath's St. Ann's Hill house of 1936 was a highly publicised work.

²⁶³ "Fischer's Restaurant." Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, PXE 778, Vol.5.

²⁶⁴ Donal O'Donovan. op. cit., pps.126-127.

²⁶⁵ Dorothy Warren (later Trotter) designed the "Talks" studio in the style of a library. Mark Hines. "BBC's Battleship Relaunched." *20C Society Newsletter*, Winter 2005/2006, pps.2-3. Alan Powers notes that Wells Coates and Chermayeff were selected separately by the BBC. Alan Powers. *Serge Chermayeff. Designer, Architect, Teacher*. RIBA, 2001, p.43.

²⁶⁶ Donal O'Donovan, op. cit., p.133 and Philip Goad. "Best Overend. Pioneer Modernist in Melbourne." *Fabrications*. 6: June 1995, pps.101-124.

²⁶⁷ Manderson is said to have returned to private architectural practice in Australia. Maraglit, op. cit., p.228 and O'Donovan, op. cit., p.285.

²⁶⁸ Harry Margalit. *Reasoning to Believe. Aspects of Modernity in Sydney Architecture and Planning 1900-1960*. PhD Thesis. Power Department of Fine Arts, Sydney University, 1997, pps.107-108. Margalit draws on the work of Conrad Hamann for the Grounds chronology.

²⁶⁹ Goad, op. cit., Also Venesta dwgs. 1934 in the Baldwinson papers, PXD 356, f.430,

²⁷⁰ *God's Architect*, op. cit., pps.154 and 156. Gamble also described Baldwinson as "a modest, rather shy man".

²⁷¹ A Baldwinson drawing of a window in McGrath's office is in the Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, PXE 778, Vol. 5, "The Office Window." 38 Conduit Street, W1, 9 March 1934.

²⁷² Arthur Baldwinson diary entry, 22 April 1934. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792.

McGrath's circular house formed from concrete was sited in the midst of a mature Surrey garden with a landscape redesigned by the noted landscape designer and St Anne's Hill resident Christopher Tunnard.²⁷³ The integration of this house into its hilltop site, the preservation of existing trees and shrubbery (a significant wisteria planting retained) and its embracing garden trelliage were to have considerable resonance in some of Baldwinson's later commissions, notably the Dobell House project of the 1940s.



Figure 3-9. Raymond McGrath. St Anne's Hill, 1935-38. Donal O'Donovan, *God's Architect*, photograph Norman McGrath, p.172.

The Land's End house, Galby, Leicester, which deserves more recognition in the annals of 1930s British modernism, was a commission from a local government figure Charles Keene. Like St Ann's Hill, it was a collaboration with the landscape architect Christopher Tunnard. McGrath's biographer states that the house and garden design was underway in 1935 but it does not appear in the pages of *AR* until April 1938. It was not featured in *AR* until their November 1941 issue suggesting a completion date of 1940.

McGrath uses a brick-faced ground floor for Land's End with an unusual rough-sawn weatherboard cladding on the first level. An upper level terrace was sheltered by a complex roof plan of projecting skillions that fall toward the rear of the house. The use of ware-edged timber cladding in such a modernist expression is an especially notable feature of Land's End. Timber-clad modernism was to become a feature of Baldwinson's earliest work.

²⁷³ Christopher Tunnard's practice and his book *Gardens in the Modern Landscape*. The Architectural Press, 1938, were especially influential in the early modernist era.

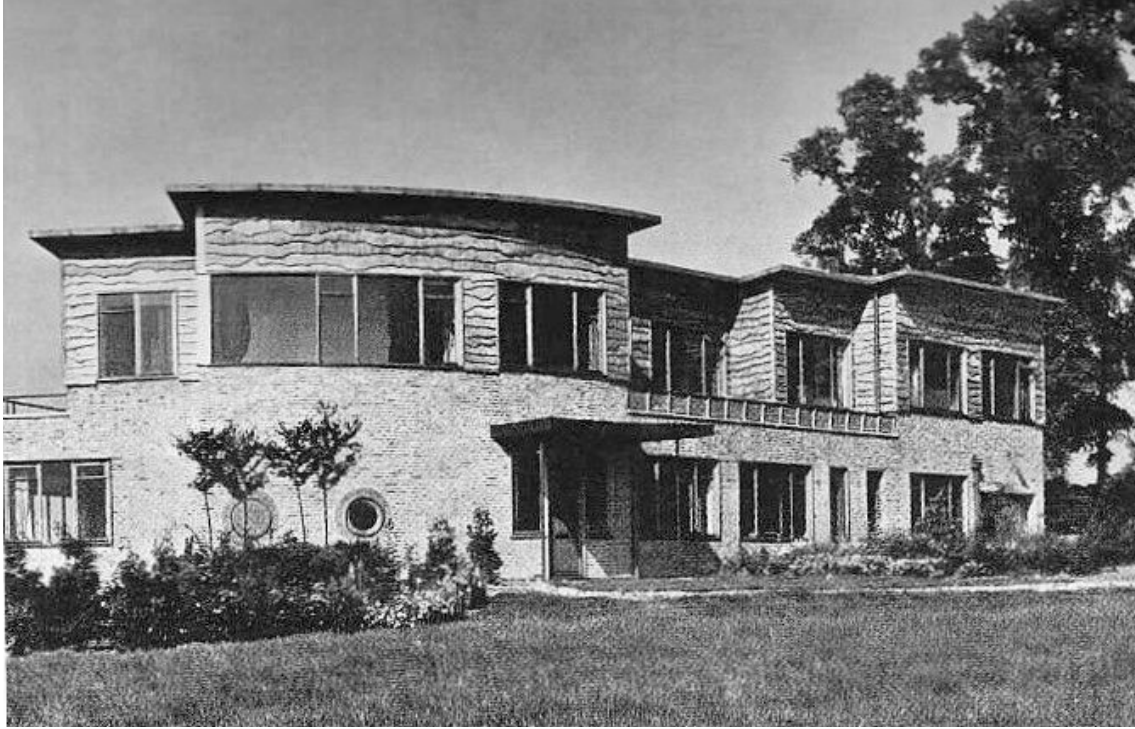


Figure 3-10. Raymond McGrath. Land's End, (now Carrygate), Leicestershire, 1935-39. Alan Powers. *Modern. The Modern Movement in Britain.* p.52.

While McGrath was not receiving a significant number of residential commissions, he was busy preparing a book on residential architecture for Faber & Faber that should have assured McGrath international fame. McGrath's worldwide survey of modernist houses *Twentieth Century Houses* written in an ultra-efficient English idiom known as "Ogden's Basic English" carries the publishing date of 1934, but delays meant that the book was not on the shelves until 1935.²⁷⁴

In the meantime, F.R.S. Yorke's international review of 20th century modernism published by The Architectural Press, *The Modern House* (1934) had appeared to considerable acclaim and widespread publicity. While McGrath's work paralleled Yorke's as a visual survey of 20th century Modernist houses, *Twentieth Century Houses* had the misfortune to appear after the release of Yorke's *The Modern House*.

²⁷⁴ C.K. Ogden. *Basic English*. Kegan Paul, 1930. Ogden developed a universal system of 850 English words with restrictions and clearly defined purposes. He supplied an afterword for McGrath's book noting parallels between McGrath's principles of modern architecture and the Basic English programme.

(1) International forms, (2) Simple use of material, (3) Clear statement, and (4) Reasoned design.

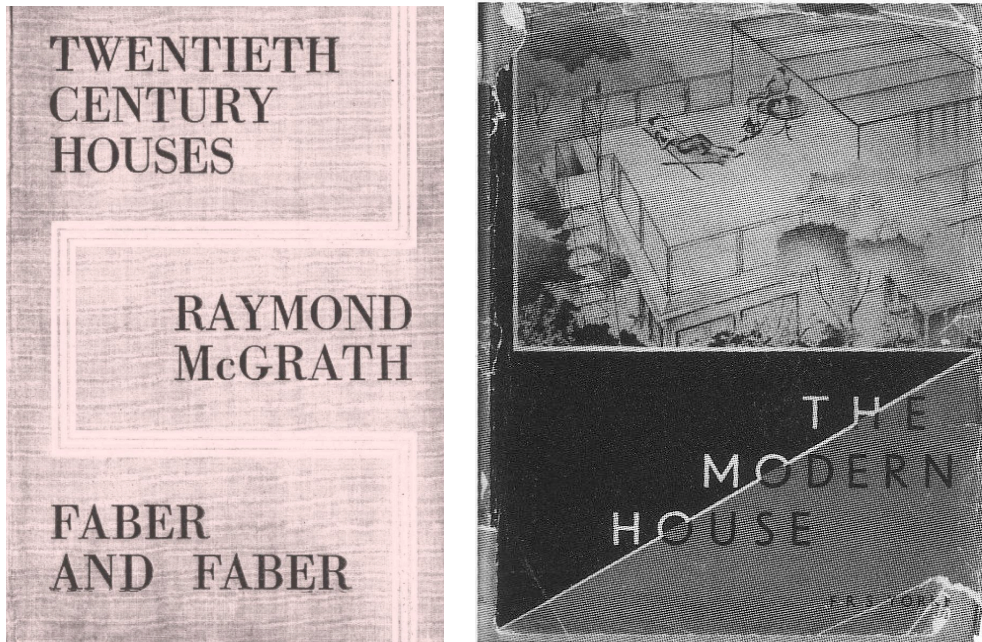


Figure 3-11. Raymond McGrath’s *Twentieth Century Houses*, Faber and Faber, (1934) (left), F.R.S. Yorke’s *The Modern House*, The Architectural Press (1934).

This delay in the publication of McGrath’s book led to the elevation of Yorke’s book into a classic of modernist architecture reprinted in several editions while McGrath’s *Twentieth Century Houses* fell dead from the press. Yorke’s survey was promoted heavily by *The Architectural Review* and became the “Baedeker” for young architects on the modernist “Grand Tour”.

On the other hand, McGrath’s book drew on photographs, plans and drawings of modernist houses from as far afield as Japan. McGrath also included twenty-three British works (three of his own commissions) constructed from 1929 to 1934 (in addition to the illustration of Arts & Crafts houses).²⁷⁵ Baldwinson’s exposure to this work would be invaluable. The plans for the houses included in *Twentieth Century Houses* were also redrawn for the Faber & Faber publication using the unique compass rose that Baldwinson features in his personal plan drawings. It is possible that Baldwinson was engaged in drawing some of the 128 plans illustrated in the book.

²⁷⁵ Yorke’s *The Modern House* could only summon eight British works for his 1934 edition although he made amends with his *Modern House in England* in 1936. Jeremy Melvin. *F.R.S. Yorke and the Evolution of British Modernism*. Wiley-Academy, 2003, p.32.

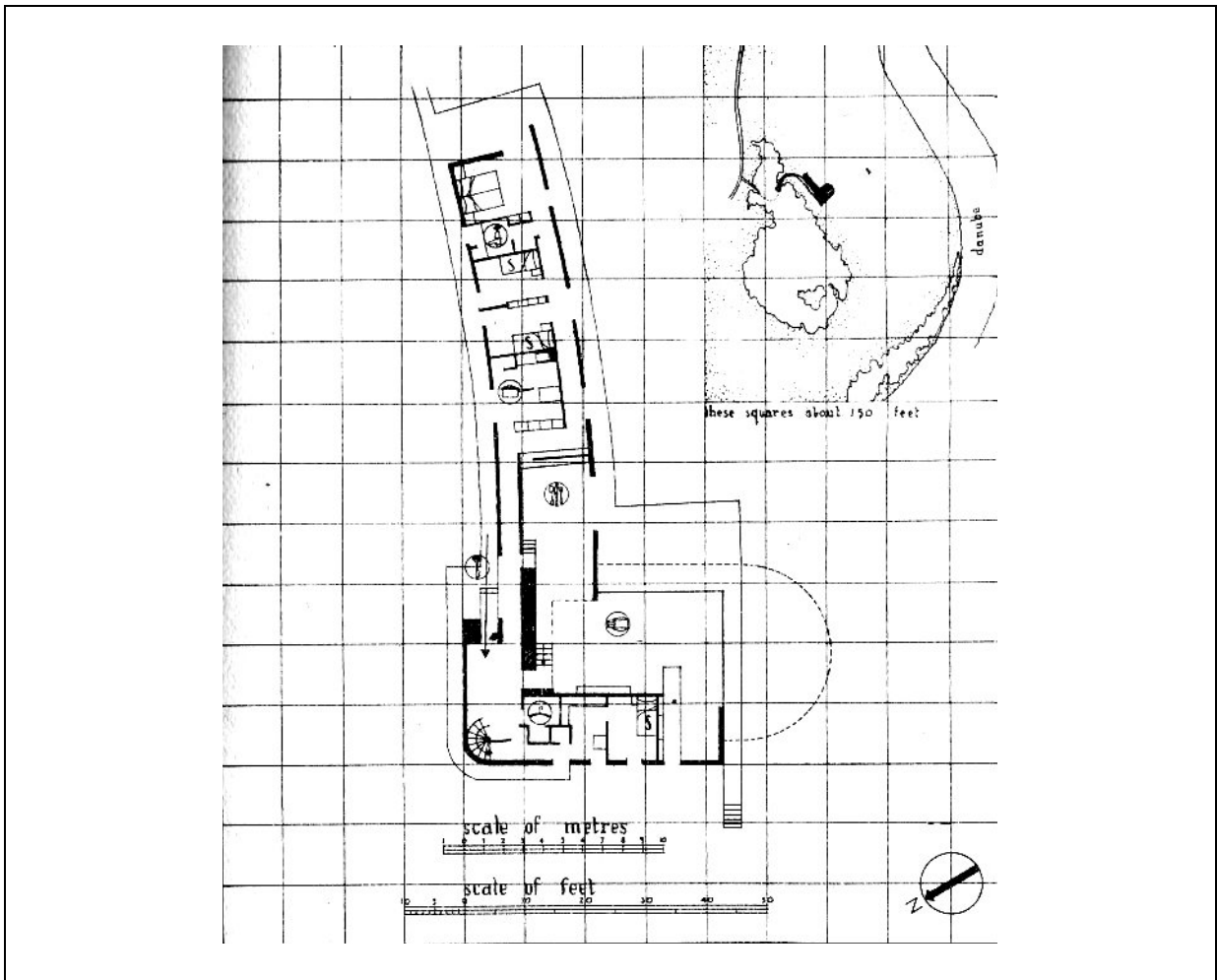


Figure 3-12. Lois Welzenbacher. Rosenbauer House, Linz, 1929. One of the earlier versions of a topographically responsive modernist-style L-plan. Raymond McGrath, *Twentieth Century Houses*, Figure 47, 1934.

Baldwinson's opportunity to immerse himself in McGrath's active practice provided him with valuable experience. To work in the same practice as McGrath and his compatriots Wells Coates and Serge Chermayeff would provide additional opportunities to experience contemporary architecture alongside some of its most adventuresome practitioners. Although the Baldwinson papers are silent regarding his personal relationships during this era, the work of Chermayeff has particular significance in Baldwinson's later work.

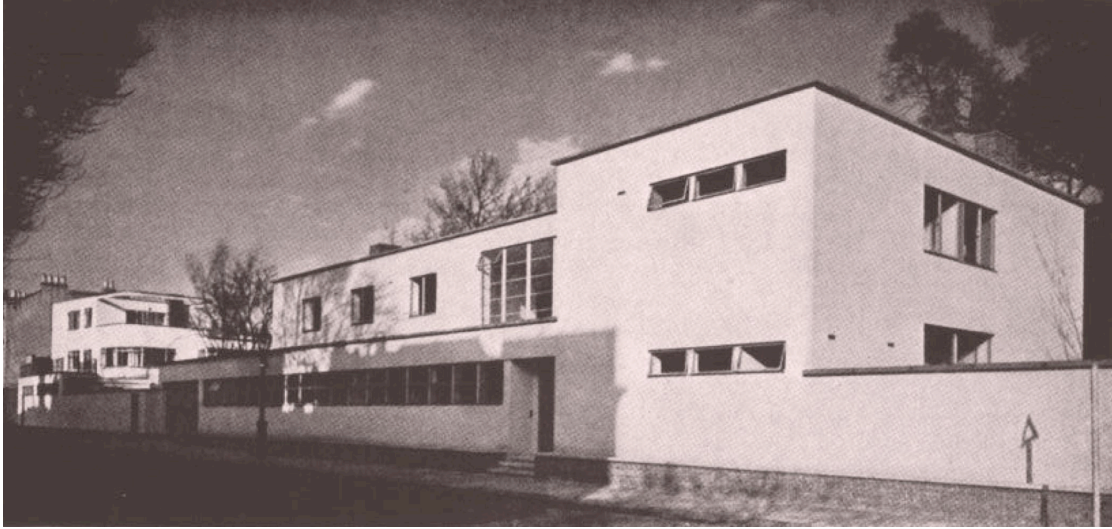


Figure 3-13. Chermayeff and Mendelsohn. Cohen House, Old Church Street, Chelsea, 1935. The Gropius and Fry house in the distance. *Modern Architecture in England*, Figure 43, Museum of Modern Art, NY, 1937.

Chermayeff was of Russian origin and immigrated to Britain where he had established an independent practice in 1930. Three years later, he formed a brief partnership with the émigré German architect Erich Mendelsohn who acquired 55 percent of the association.²⁷⁶ Most significantly for Baldwinson, Chermayeff and Mendelsohn were engaged in the 1935 design and construction of the Cohen House, Old Church Street, Chelsea. This location was adjacent to the site of a 1936 Gropius and Fry commission on which Baldwinson was working.

The influence of Chermayeff and Mendelsohn's Nimmo House and the Cohen House, can be surmised from a sequence of unrealized project drawings in the Baldwinson papers. His Mary Ellen Guise House project drawings of elevated strip windows, two-level stepped elevations, long, curved corners and the obvious attractions of concrete are realised in a perspective drawing in Baldwinson's portfolio.²⁷⁷ Like many of Baldwinson's later houses, the street elevations make a modest contribution to the streetscape, preferring to surprise the visitor with a generously glazed outlook from the interior.

²⁷⁶ Regina Stephan, editor. *Erich Mendelsohn Architect 1887-1953*. Monacelli Press, 1999, pps.190-203. This practice appears to have survived until ca.1937. Alan Powers' recent study of Chermayeff records the presence of "...a shaved-headed Australian known [in the practice] as Whack-o..." within the partnership. "Whack-o" remains unidentified but the demeanour suggests Best Overend. Alan Powers. *Serge Chermayeff*. RIBA, 2001, p.70.

²⁷⁷ No working drawings for the Mary Ellen Guise House have been located to date.

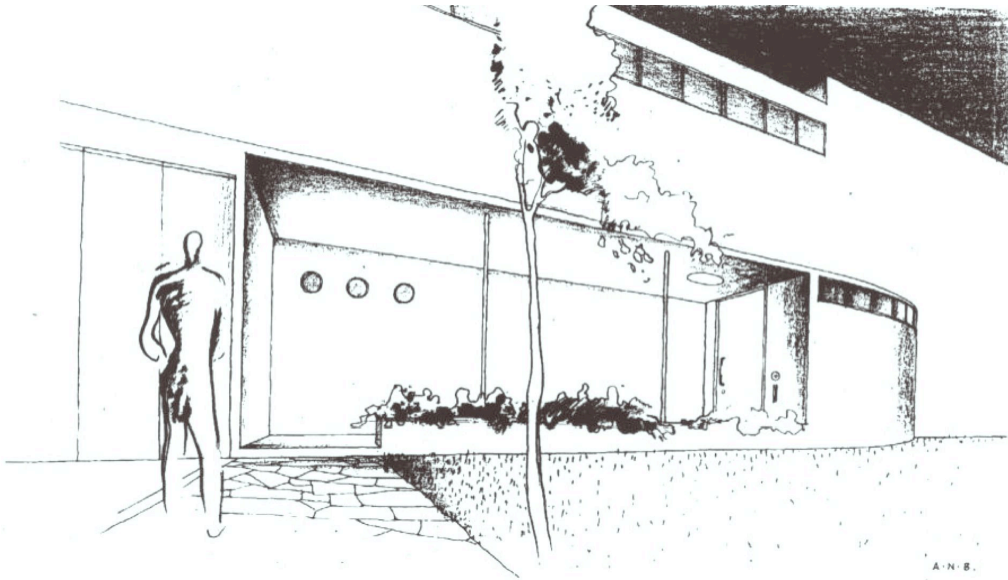


Figure 3-14. Arthur Baldwinson. Sketch for Mary Ellen Guise House project, ca.1934-35. Baldwinson papers, PXD 356, f.1277.

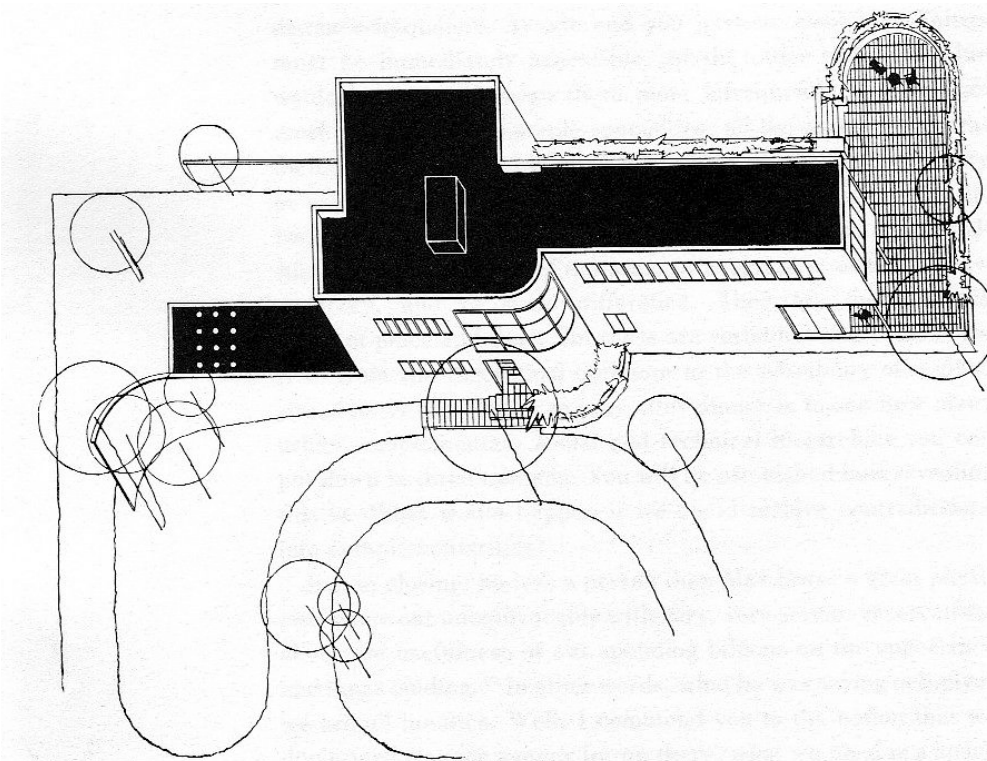


Figure 3-15. Serge Chermayeff and Eric Mendelsohn. Nimmo House Perspective, ca.1935. R. Plunz, editor. *Serge Chermayeff. Design and the Public Good*, p. 72.

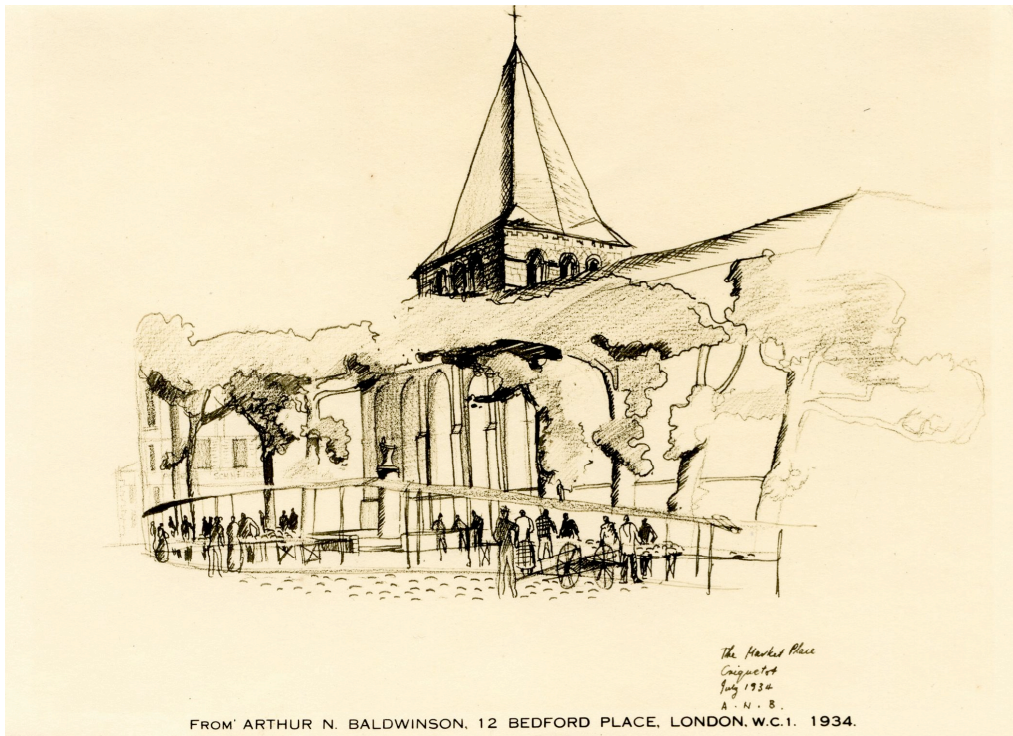


Figure 3-16. The “evolving” Arthur Baldwinson. “Market Place, Criquetot”, [Normandy]. Christmas Card, 1934. Addressed from the apartment he shared with Rae Featherstone. Chris Wood Collection.

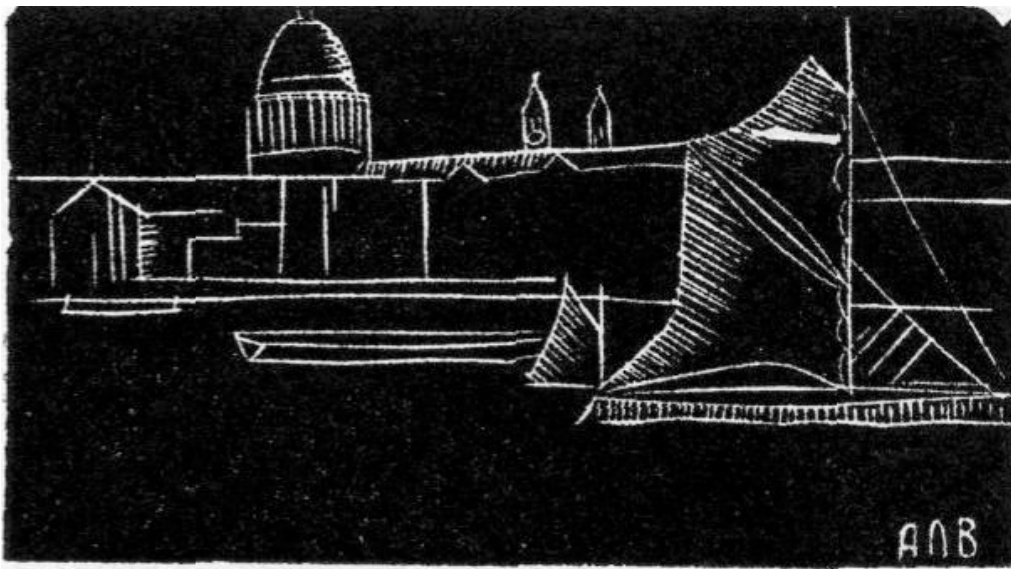


Figure 3-17. The “new” Arthur Baldwinson. St Paul and the Thames. Baldwinson’s drawing style was profoundly affected by the milieu of London and the style of Raymond McGrath, Christopher Tunnard and other contemporaries. Linocut reproduced in *Manuscripts*, No. 8, 1934, p.43.

Independent of Mendelsohn's masonry designs, however, Chermayeff was designing his own timber residence, Bentley Wood, East Sussex by 1937 using a weatherboard timber that would be very familiar to Baldwinson, West Australian jarrah. On the ground level, Chermayeff's flat-roofed house introduced generous glazing along with an upper level verandah shielded by trelliage. A "free plan" interior, divided by a masonry fireplace, opens directly into a landscape of open fields. A Henry Moore reclining figure formed part of the vista.²⁷⁸ The principal glazed elevations are painted white while the side and approach elevations retained their rich red jarrah timber hues.

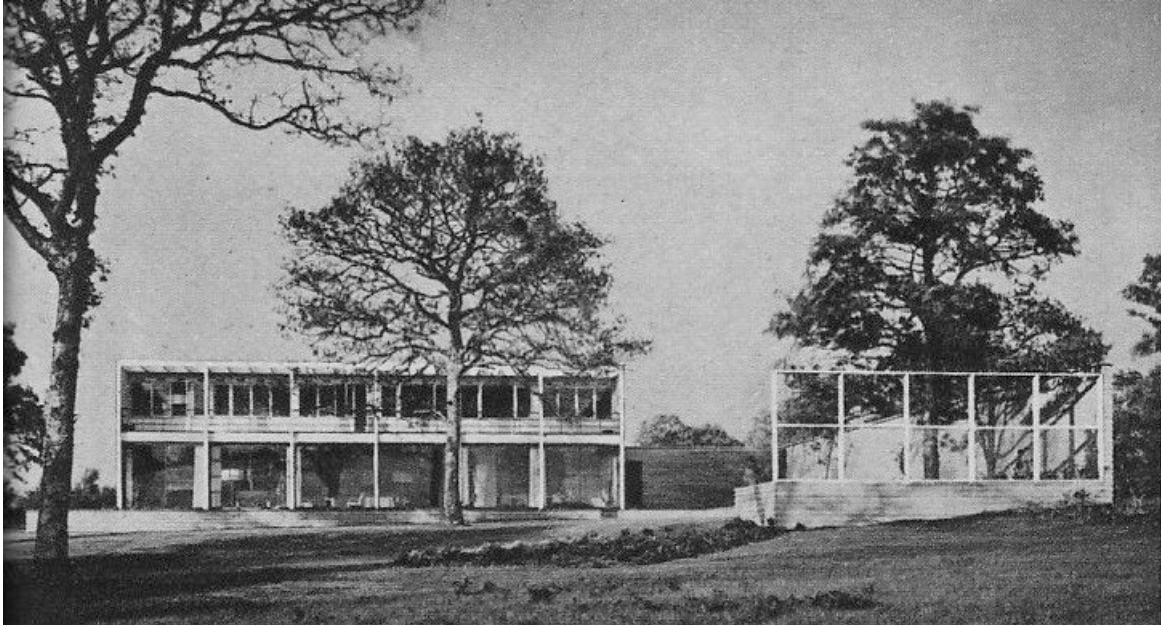


Figure 3-18. Serge Chermayeff. Bentley Wood, East Sussex, completed in 1937. Views are to open fields. The approach to the house on the opposite elevation reveals little of the extensive vistas of the site. R. Plunz, editor. *Serge Chermayeff. Design and the Public Good*, p. 340.

Chermayeff's design for Bentley Wood was one of the most successful British timber modernist houses. The house was rich with possibilities for Baldwinson and as his Australian practice matured, some of his designs draw from "Bentley Wood's" openness to the weather, its palette of natural materials and the inclusive, embracing site-responsiveness of the house.

²⁷⁸ "Bentley Wood." *AR*, vol.82, 1937, pps.11-12. The house is also described in Alan Powers. *Modern. The Modern Movement in Britain*. Merrell, 2005. Powers describes Christopher Tunnard as a landscape consultant for the grounds.

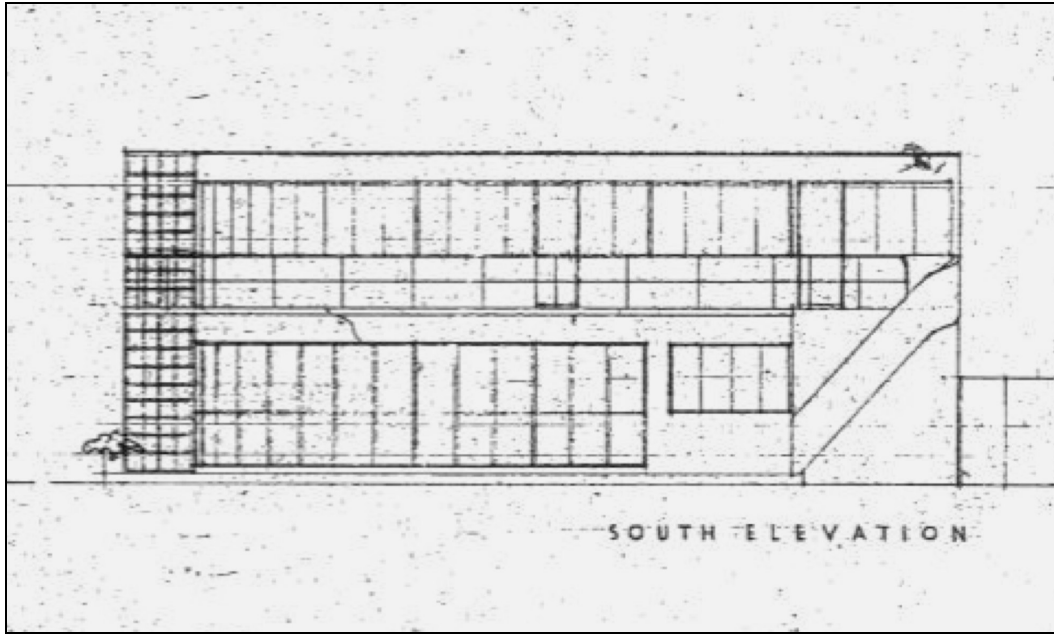


Figure 3-19. Arthur Baldwinson. Sketch for Mary Ellen Guise House project. ca. 1934-35. Baldwinson papers, PXD 356, Detail of f.1276.



Figure 3-20. Serge Chermayeff. Interior of Bentley Wood with sliding glass doors suspended from tracks. *AR*, vol. 82, 1937, pps.11-12.

Encouraged by the published images of Middle European modernists using timber and/or weatherboard cladding in Yorke's *The Modern House* and McGrath's *20th Century Houses* and the innovations of Chermayeff, a number of British modernist architects appear to have begun to experiment with the introduction of weatherboard cladding. Baldwinson's earliest Australian projects in the late 1930s took careful note of these developments in timber cladding.

BALDWINSON AT ADAMS, THOMPSON AND FRY

A 1934 diary entry amongst the Baldwinson papers beginning on 22 April (unfortunately this diary concludes eight days later on 30 April) features this brief entry: "I remained working with Raymond McGrath at a salary of 3/15/0 per week and commenced work with Adams Thompson and Fry where I am at present employed at 4/0/0 per week."²⁷⁹ The Baldwinson papers reveal, however, that he had done earlier work for Adams Thompson and Fry while employed in McGrath's office.



Figure 3-21. Maxwell Fry. Kensal House, North Kensington. 1934. The playground form is derived from the footprint of the former gas-holder on the site. Courtauld Institute, no. 544/40 (28).

The principal of Adams Thompson and Fry, Maxwell Fry grew up in Liverpool, studying at the city's School of Architecture from 1920-23 taking a B.A. in 1923.²⁸⁰ As a member of

²⁷⁹ Arthur Baldwinson diary entry, 22 April 1934. Baldwinson Diaries, ML MSS 7792.

²⁸⁰ Alan Powers. "(Edwin) Maxwell Fry" (1899-1987). *The Dictionary of National Biography 1986-1990*, Oxford University Press, 1996, pps.146-147.

Adams Thompson and Fry, he was one of the founders of the British MARS Group.²⁸¹ Soon after Baldwinson joined the practice as an assistant, Fry was commissioned by the Gas Light and Coke Company of London to design the Kensal Green block of flats on the site of an abandoned gasworks for their employees.

Fry was motivated by social concerns in architecture. Working with the community activist Elizabeth Denby, he developed plans for Kensal House that included communal amenities such as child-minding facilities, a laundry room and a canteen. The architectural significance of the project is celebrated and J.M. Richards used a perspective of Kensal House as the cover illustration on his 1940 Pelican paperback *Introduction to Modern Architecture*.

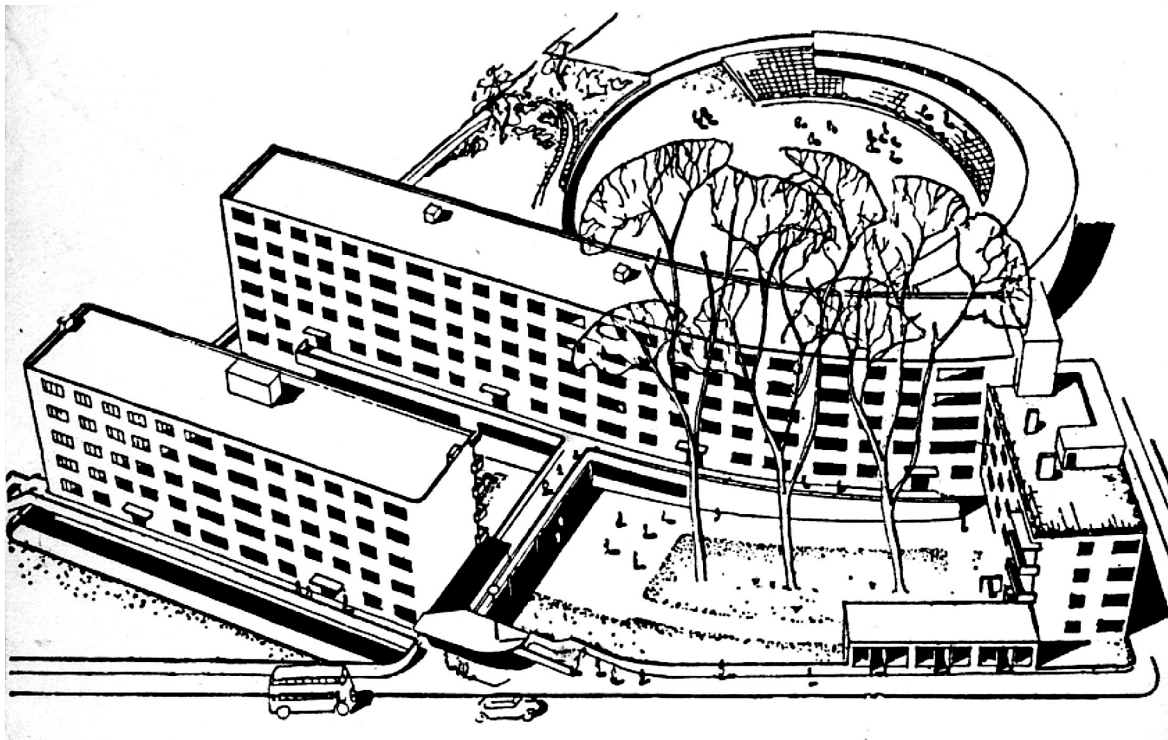


Figure 3-22. Maxwell Fry. Kensal House proposal used on the cover of J.M. Richards, *An Introduction to Modern Architecture*, Pelican, 1940. Illustration by R. Vaughn.

When completed in 1937, Kensal House consisted of two formed concrete blocks of units containing 68 two to three bedroom flats forming an “urban village”.²⁸² A small selection of signed Baldwinson drawings for the “Workman’s Flats”, Kensal Green, are in his papers at the State Library of NSW. The collection includes a ground floor plan, typical plans of units,

²⁸¹ Maxwell Fry. *Autobiographical Sketches*. Elek, London, 1975, p.140. Fry’s memoir muses on his role in the DIA, MARS and the Gropius practice but provides little or no detail.

²⁸² Elizabeth Denby had worked with Fry on earlier model flats, R.E. Sassoon House, Peckham (1934) before Kensal House (1937). Denby is described as a champion of the “Re-Housed” rather than the “Re-Housers”. Elizabeth Darling. “‘A Woman In Touch With Working Women’ Elizabeth Denby and Working-class Housing in 1930s.” Britain Workshop, 2002: *Women and Built Space, 1860-1960*. www.nottingham.ac.uk/history/cuc/wshop/2k2-abs.html#darling. 18.02.2005.

sections and elevations.²⁸³ Each unit had two balconies and the blocks were positioned for a northern exposure for the living areas. The buildings were painted stark white.²⁸⁴

A diary entry on 23-24 April records “Office all day- working on elevation for the flats at Kensal Green.”²⁸⁵ Arthur Baldwinson was busy on the 23 and 24th of April catching up on postponed work because his diary entry of 22 April 1934 reveals that he had been on what the 1930s Londoner called a “ramble”. Baldwinson had acquired a one-half interest in a motor bicycle and used it to explore the countryside. It was a valuable experience.



Figure 3-23. “... it was my first experience of seeing a first rate modern house.”²⁸⁶ Amyas Connell. High and Over, 1928-30. [www.amersham.org.uk/ tour/houses.htm](http://www.amersham.org.uk/tour/houses.htm).source.

*Discovered on the hill overlooking Amersham, the famous High and Over modern house that I had seen illustrated in the architecture journals. I was absolutely delighted with it. Actually, it was my first experience of seeing a first rate modern house. It had a splendid site on the top of the hill, spread out to catch the sun and the broad view. [...] In the fine sunshine the white walls were bright and full of life. I was most enthusiastic.*²⁸⁷

²⁸³ Baldwinson papers, PXD 356, ff. 1282-1283

²⁸⁴ The buildings have been recently restored.

²⁸⁵ Personal diary, 22 April and concluding 30 April 1934. Includes trace paper outdoor sketch. Includes addendum (loose sheet) of 21 July 1934. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792.

²⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 22 April 1934 entry.

²⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 22 April 1934 entry.

There is some irony in that “first rate” house, High and Over that Baldwinson had come so far to see. The building was designed and constructed by the New Zealand architect Amyas Connell in 1928-31. This Y-plan residence is generally regarded as the first uncompromisingly modernist house in England. Alan Powers, authority on British modernism, records that the practice’s persistent and “jaunty disregard for architectural propriety [...] nearly always provoked controversy”.²⁸⁸ Amyas Connell later formed a partnership with fellow New Zealander Basil Ward (a brother-in-law) and in 1933, the reinforced concrete specialist Colin Lucas joined them to create the successful practice Connell, Ward & Lucas. This partnership between architects and a concrete specialist parallels the post-1945 partnership formed by Arthur Baldwinson and the Melbourne engineer Eric Gibson. The productive Connell Ward & Lucas partnership was concluded by the 1939-45 War.

Although there are few direct stylistic parallels between “High and Over” in the later work of Baldwinson, Connell’s hilltop siting (“to catch the sun and the broad view” as Baldwinson records in his diary) and the design of the residence to follow land contours, the use of stone retaining walls to form outdoor living areas and the use of asymmetrically-placed strip casement windows has reverberations in his later work.

During Baldwinson’s early tenure, Maxwell Fry’s architectural practice was dominated by his work in medium density housing at Kensal House and the earlier Sassoon flats (1934) to the detriment of his residential work. But some of Fry’s “small house” designs, especially, the 1934-35-weatherboard house, Little Winch, Hertfordshire, produced for the London director of the advertising agency J. Walter Thompson, helped to introduce a new palette of timber for modernist residential design in Britain.²⁸⁹

Little Winch sits upon a podium of red brick that provides a garage and open plan living and dining room divided by an accordion-fold partition. The living and dining area opens onto a terrace that carries the full length of the house. The terrace is accessible via an external stair. The upper levels are clad in unpainted weatherboard and animated with steel casement windows. The projecting eaves of the flat roof are enclosed and painted white.

With the exception of vernacular structures such as farm buildings and commercial sheds and the well-known British timber framing tradition, weatherboard was not a popular residential cladding material in the United Kingdom. R. W. Brunskill and the Vernacular Architecture Group in Britain have observed that while there was some local interest in weatherboard cladding (mostly oak and elm) in southeast England in the latter years of the 18th century, but its use was confined to small cottages.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ Alan Powers. *Modern. The Modern Movement in Britain*. Merrell, 2005, p.88.

²⁸⁹ *ibid.*, pps.110-111.

²⁹⁰ R. W. Brunskill. *Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture*. Faber and Faber, 1987 edition, pps.64-65.



Figure 3-24. Maxwell Fry. Little Winch, Hertfordshire, 1934-36. The original external stair and porch have been replaced with steel and glass. Alan Powers. *Modern. The Modern Movement in Britain*. p.110.



Figure 3-25. [Margaret] Justin Blanco White. Shawns, Cambridge, 1938-38. Alan Powers. *Modern. The Modern Movement in Britain*. p.52.

Architects adapting timber cladding for residential use during Baldwinson's residence in England included Chermayeff's own house, (illustrated above), Maxwell Fry, Justin Blanco White (Margaret Justin Blanco White) and Raymond McGrath's commission for "Land's End" shown above.²⁹¹ Powers suggests that the timber-clad modernism illustrates a "...balance between Modernism and the English tradition of rapport with nature".²⁹²

Baldwinson at Gropius and Fry

In 1934, Maxwell Fry's practice took on a new partner. Walter Gropius, former head of the Bauhaus (Weimar and Dessau) from 1919 to 1928, immigrated to England in the spring of 1934. His appearance was carefully orchestrated by Jack ("Plywood") Pritchard, the head of Isokon (best known for plywood furniture and its architectural commissions), a great friend and patron to European immigrant architects and designers in the mid-1930s. Pritchard was instrumental in securing employment opportunities for Gropius, Marcel Breuer, Lazlo Moholy-Nagy and others.²⁹³

Gropius had travelled widely since his 1928 resignation from the directorship of the Dessau Bauhaus and visited America, Italy, England and other European countries.²⁹⁴ Gropius was in London in May 1934 to attend a CIAM meeting (Congrès Internationaux de Architecture Moderne).²⁹⁵ This appearance was accompanied by a 15-26 May RIBA Exhibition of Gropius's work including drawings, photographs and diagrammes. Gropius was also invited to give a lecture at the Design and Industries Association (DIA) where Maxwell Fry was the Chair during the illustrated lecture.²⁹⁶ Although Gropius was well known amongst modernists, these appearances enhanced public awareness of Gropius amongst the profession and the public. As the political situation in Germany deteriorated, Gropius and his spouse Ise Gropius were quietly pursuing opportunities for immigration and Pritchard was pleased to provide him employment with Isokon.²⁹⁷ On 19 October 1934, Gropius arrived in London and was appointed "Controller of Design" at Isokon.²⁹⁸

²⁹¹ Timber-clad works by these architects are illustrated in Alan Powers. *Modern. The Modern Movement in Britain*. Merrell, 2005. The architect Margaret Justin Blanco White played a role in the Gropius commission for the design project for Christ College, Cambridge illustrated below. See Powers, pps.52-53.

²⁹² Alan Powers. *Britain. Modern Architectures in History*, Reaktion Books, 2007, p.70.

²⁹³ Fiona McCarthy. "Jack Pritchard and the Hampstead of the Thirties." In Jack Pritchard, *View from a Long Chair. Memoirs of Jack Pritchard*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1984.

²⁹⁴ While Gropius has not found a definitive biographer in English, his British career in the 1930s has been closely studied by L.H. Cormier working with the Gropius papers at the Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University and through 1980s interviews she conducted with many of Gropius's contacts [now deceased] in Britain.

²⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p.21.

²⁹⁶ Gilbert Herbert. *Dream of the Factory Made House*. MIT Press, 1985, p.206. Verified by Fry, *op. cit.*, p.146.

²⁹⁷ Like Mies van der Rohe, Gropius had an uncomfortable number (for the National Socialist government) of direct associations with the international communist movement during his post-1914-18 War career.

²⁹⁸ Fiona MacCarthy, *op. cit.*, p.17.

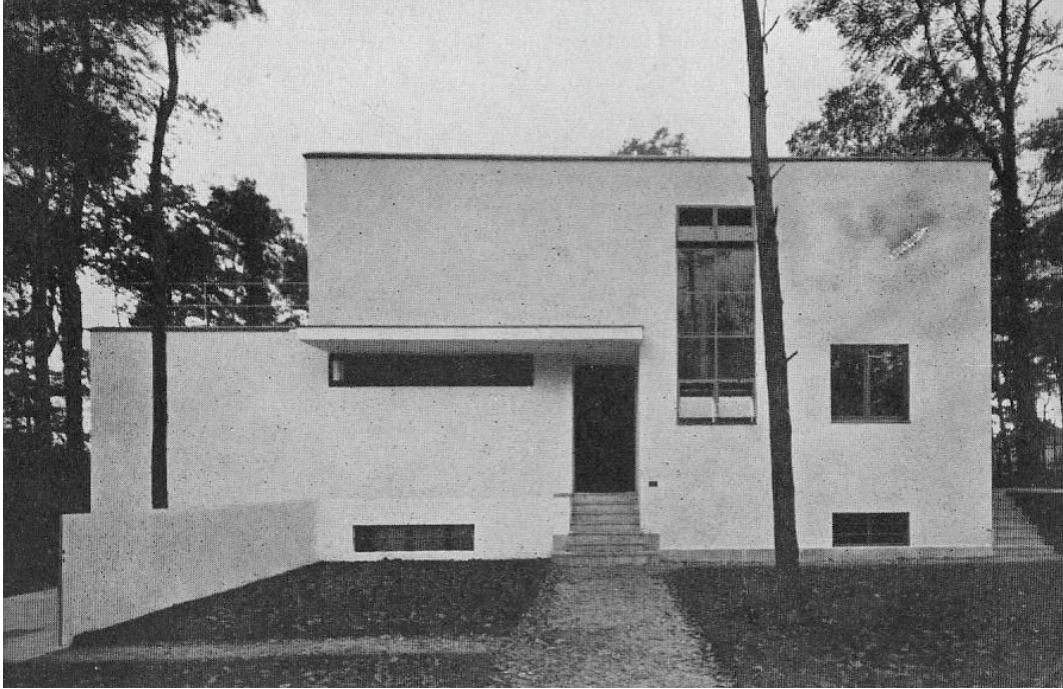


Figure 3-26. Walter Gropius. Single family house, Dessau. 1926. Gropius's work was published in the 1934 edition of F.R.S. Yorke, *The Modern House* and McGrath's *Twentieth Century Houses*. Illustration from Yorke, *The Modern House*, 4th ed., p.106.

Pritchard soon paired Gropius with Fry for an Isokon commission (known as Isokon 3) for a residential development project at St Leonard's Hill, near Windsor Castle "Where Life is Living".²⁹⁹ Wells Coates had designed Pritchard's earlier Isokon 1 in 1933, better known as the "Lawn Road Flats". Isokon 2, a Pritchard project for Manchester and later, Birmingham, remained unbuilt.

By the time of the St Leonard's Hill project, Fry had designed two socially innovative London apartment complexes, Kensal Green and Sassoon. The pairing of Gropius and Fry was logical as St Leonard's Hill apartments for Isokon were designed as two blocks containing a total of 69 units set in a park site of 13 hectares (33 acres). While the designs by Gropius and Fry were innovative examples of the latest European planning, the project went nowhere. Funding was elusive.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁹ ISOKON prospectus, cited in Cormier, op. cit., p.43.

³⁰⁰ Gropius's work with Maxwell Fry in his early period of adaptation in 1934-1935 ranged from industrial design for Isokon and alterations and additions to houses at Russell Square and Sussex Place, London. These modest 1934-35 commissions are not highlighted in the catalogue of the Walter Gropius Archive of 1990 where only one Isokon table design for this period is illustrated.

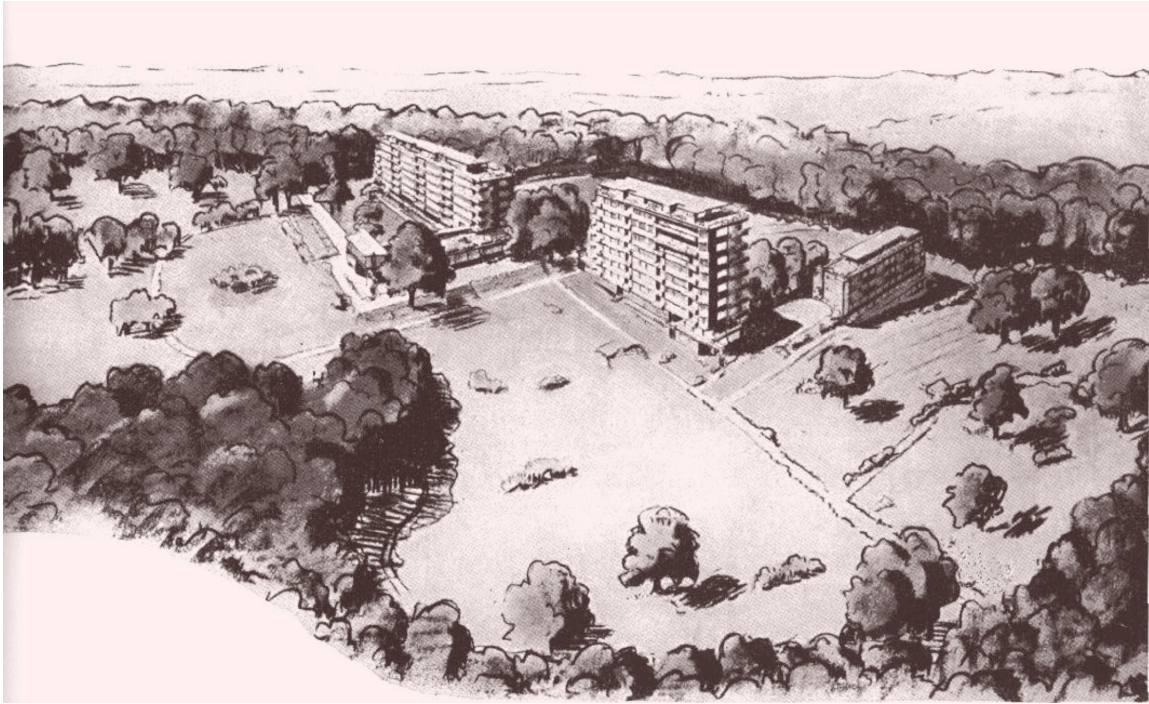


Figure 3-27. Gropius and Fry. St Leonard's Hill, Windsor, 1935. Perspective in the Baldwinson drawing style. Illustrated and unattributed in Sigfried Giedion. *Walter Gropius*, Reinhold, 1954, p.207

The St Leonard's Hill project seems to be Baldwinson's first opportunity to work on a Gropius project. His direct involvement is suggested by drawings of St Leonard's Hill perspectives in Baldwinson's distinctive style. The generous contract with Fry, however, allowed Gropius six "apprentices".³⁰¹

Despite the promotional efforts of *AR* in 1935 with articles on Isokon 3 at St Leonard's Hill and a laudatory J.M. Richards survey article on Gropius, there was no work for the Gropius and Fry partnership.³⁰² While he was a presence in British architecture and religiously attended MARS and DIA meetings, there were very few commissions available. Baldwinson's papers show only two 1935 projects while Gropius's job sheets are blank. These modest 1935 commissions represent a difficult time for the Gropius and Fry team.

During the period of the St Leonard's Hill project, McGrath sensed these difficulties and publicly observed "Gropius is at his best when working on a great scale, as in mass buildings and housing developments where there is room for him to give free plan to his power for grouping and ordering."³⁰³ 1935 was not the year for Gropius to display these talents.

³⁰¹ Gropius Archive 5/407 in Cormier, op. cit., p.50.

³⁰² The Isokon 3 project is explored in *AR*, vol.77, 1935, pps.188-192 and a survey on Gropius and the Bauhaus appear in *AR*, vol.78, pps.45-46.

³⁰³ Raymond McGrath. *Twentieth Century Houses*. Faber and Faber, 1934, p.150.

Finally, in 1936, the architectural network began to attract business and there were a number of new projects. This, in turn, generated work for Baldwinson. His personal papers now illustrate his direct involvement in significant projects.

For Gropius and Fry, 1936 began with a commission from Benn Wolfe Levy and Constance Cumming for a single-family residence.³⁰⁴ Benn Levy, an Oxford-educated playwright and theatre impresario, had quite a reputation amongst London's creative society. Chelsea was a favoured location for London's "Smart Set" in the early decades of the 20th century. The site was 64 Old Church Street, next door to the modernist Cohen house at 66 Old Church Street occupied by Benn Levy's cousin. Both houses were opposite the Chelsea Art Club.

Cohen had earlier engaged Mendelsohn and Chermayeff to design his house (1935-1936) at 66 Old Church Street and it has been suggested that the architects deferred the commission to design the Benn Levy house to the Gropius and Fry practice.³⁰⁵ However, Mendelsohn and Chermayeff had just won a major commission to design the Bexhill Pavilion in 1935 and their practice was a busy one.³⁰⁶

According to Baldwinson's London flatmate Rae Featherstone, Baldwinson became the full-time assistant of Gropius with the Levy commission. "Arthur produced the working drawings. I recall him telling of the sketch plan stage on butter paper when Gropius, dissatisfied with his plan, just turned over the sheet and worked on the mirrored plan..."³⁰⁷ This direct degree of involvement is supported by the Levy House drawings in the Baldwinson papers.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴ A multi-storey single-family residence for P.H. Goodbrook, begun in 1935 for Adams, Thompson and Fry cannot be traced. Unsigned drawings of a floor plan and sections of this timber house for Adams, Thompson and Fry are in the Baldwinson papers and the lack of additional documentation suggests that the house did not proceed beyond the project stage.

³⁰⁵ L.H. Cormier, op. cit., p.90. Mendelsohn's well-known personality, however, suggests that this generosity is unlikely. The architecture writer and critic J.M. Richards has said that Mendelsohn was "only friendly to those he thought could be useful to him". Other British observers made similar comments. Charlotte Benton, "Buildings in England 1933-41" in Regina Stephan, *Eric Mendelsohn*, Monacelli Press, 1998, p.271.

³⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p.90.

³⁰⁷ Holman, op. cit., p.42.

³⁰⁸ Baldwinson papers, PXD 356, ff.1289-1291.

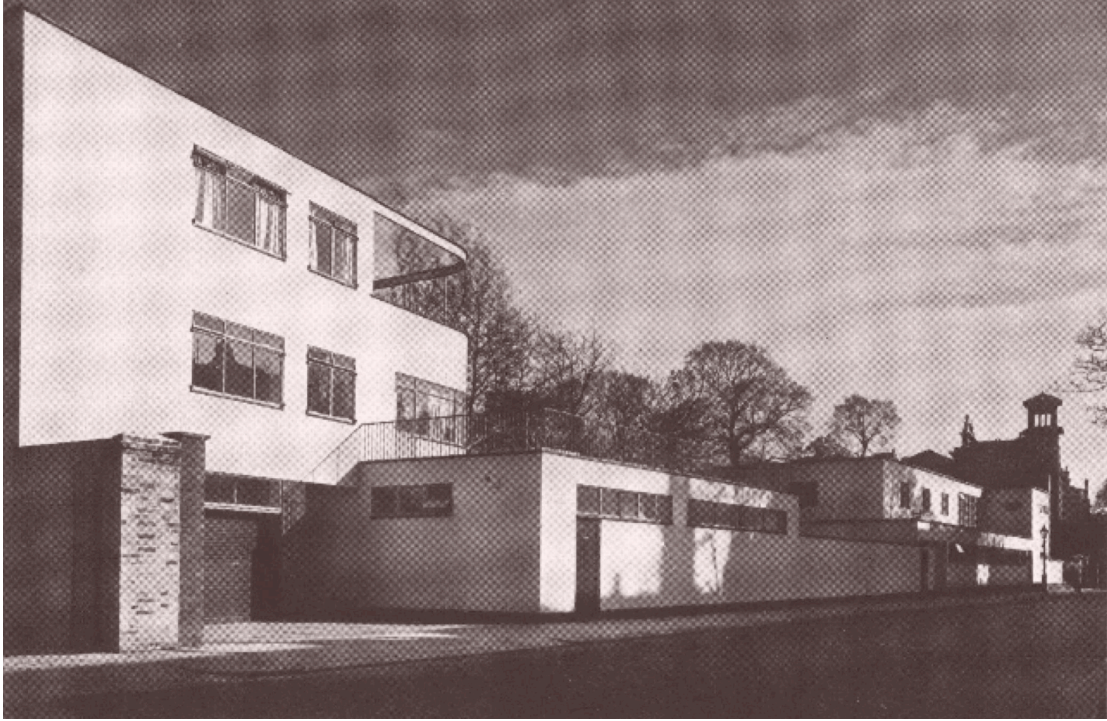


Figure 3-28. Gropius and Fry. The Benn Levy House (with the Cohen House in the distance). 1936. *Modern Architecture in England*, Figure 28, Museum of Modern Art, NY, 1937.

The Levy House presented a stark façade to Old Church Street with a single-storey wall relieved by a garage opening, one blank door opening onto the street and a pair of horizontal strip windows over the door. A capped masonry wall to the street elevation unifies the two properties. Like its neighbour, the Mendelsohn and Chermayeff house for Cohen, the contribution to the Chelsea streetscape is minimal. Inside the allotment, however, a generous expanse of walled garden is provided by the economic massing of one wing of the house against the walled footpath boundary. Three storeys of casement windows, floor-to-ceiling plate glass and tiled terraces overlooked a treed garden.

The construction of the house relied on steel framing and with brick infill rendered with cement enlivened with carborundum and mica chips. In plan, the house is socially regressive with servants' quarters, day and night nurseries, and long hallways providing formal divisions between the public and private spaces. The architectural innovations are found in the use of elevated organic-shaped terraces that embrace the garden boundaries, an internal steel structure, the expansive sliding glass walls and the purely functional (rather than symmetrical) placement of window patterns to control views and light. Suggesting the unrecorded presence of Baldwinson, Cormier notes the unusual use of "Australian Walnut" (probably blackwood) panelling in Benn Levy's study.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁹ Cormier, op. cit., p.91, citing Gropius Archive item 9/98.

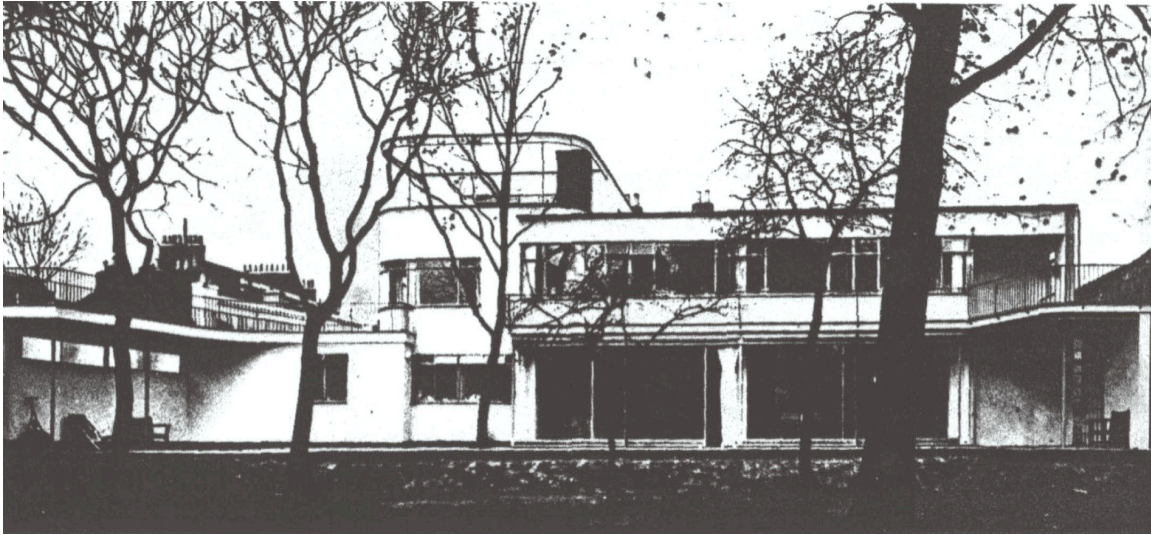


Figure 3-29. Gropius and Fry. The Benn Levy House, garden view. 1936. Paolo Berdini. *Walter Gropius*. Architektur Artemic, Zurich, 1984, p.136.

The moderne organic curves on the rear elevations of the Benn Levy House suggest that Gropius's designers had been peering over the wall at the Mendelsohn and Chermayeff designs. The plan strays far from the rigorous symmetry found in Gropius's earlier Bauhaus-era work. The 1937 Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) survey of British architecture organised by Henry-Russell Hitchcock, observed that "Gropius's partner, Maxwell Fry is one of the ablest younger Englishmen and Gropius's English work is possibly inferior to what Fry has done alone." The Gropius and Fry Levy House was, however, illustrated in the 1937 MoMA show.³¹⁰

A perspective for a "House in Canada" project was prepared by Baldwinson in 1937 for an unknown client and incorporated some elements of the Benn Levy House including the space-defining aerial enclosures on the upper balconies.³¹¹ This device had appeared earlier and Yorke's *The Modern House* illustrated this device in the 1927 Corbusier and Jeanneret work for the Stuttgart *Weissenhofsiedlung* as well as the 1931-32 work of the Czech architects J.K. Riha and Ladislav Zak. Although Baldwinson used it in this 1937 perspective, he does not appear to have used it in a built project. No working drawings are known for Baldwinson's Canadian project.

³¹⁰ Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Catherine Bauer. *Modern Architecture in England*. Museum of Modern Art, 1937, p.30.

³¹¹ Through McGrath's office, Baldwinson had professional associations with Wells Coates (born in Japan to Canadian missionaries) and Christopher Tunnard, both Canadians but there is no evidence linking them to the "House in Canada".



Figure 3-30. Arthur Baldwinson. “House in Canada” for an unknown client, 1937. Baldwinson papers, PXD 356, f.2486.

The Donaldson House, also known as ‘The Wood House’ was Gropius’s next domestic commission for Gropius and Fry. Holman asserts, “Baldwinson was closely involved in the design and documentation of this project...”³¹² This involvement is further supported by a selection of Donaldson House drawings in the Baldwinson papers. Fry’s memoir notes that he personally played “no part” in this project.³¹³

The Wood House was designed for the land-owning aristocratic family of Sir J.G.S. Donaldson, a progressive figure and farmer with holdings in the village of Shipbourne. Unusual for Gropius, but following Chermayeff and Fry, the house is timber-framed and clad in natural cedar weatherboard.³¹⁴ It was sited in a rural landscape with vistas to every aspect. The house is clad in timber with grouped casement windows painted white compose the external views. Like the Levy House, functional considerations guide window placement, rather than concerns with the symmetry of elevations.

³¹² Holman, op. cit., p.46.

³¹³ Fry, op. cit., p.150.

³¹⁴ The design does not fit within the conventional view of Gropius’s work but an earlier Gropius design from the 1920s drew on the Middle European tradition of building in wood. In 1920-21, Gropius was commissioned by Adolf Sommerfeld to design a timber house for the Berlin suburb of Dahlem. Gropius wrote, “Timber is the building material of the present day, precisely because it is so suited to the primitive early stages of our renewal of life.” See Christopher Wilk. *Modernism. Designing a New World*, V&A, p.63.



Figure 3-31. Gropius and Fry, the Donaldson House, Sevenoaks, Shipbourne, 1936. *The Architectural Review*. "A Timber House in Kent." February, 1938, pps.61-63. The cladding is raw timber.

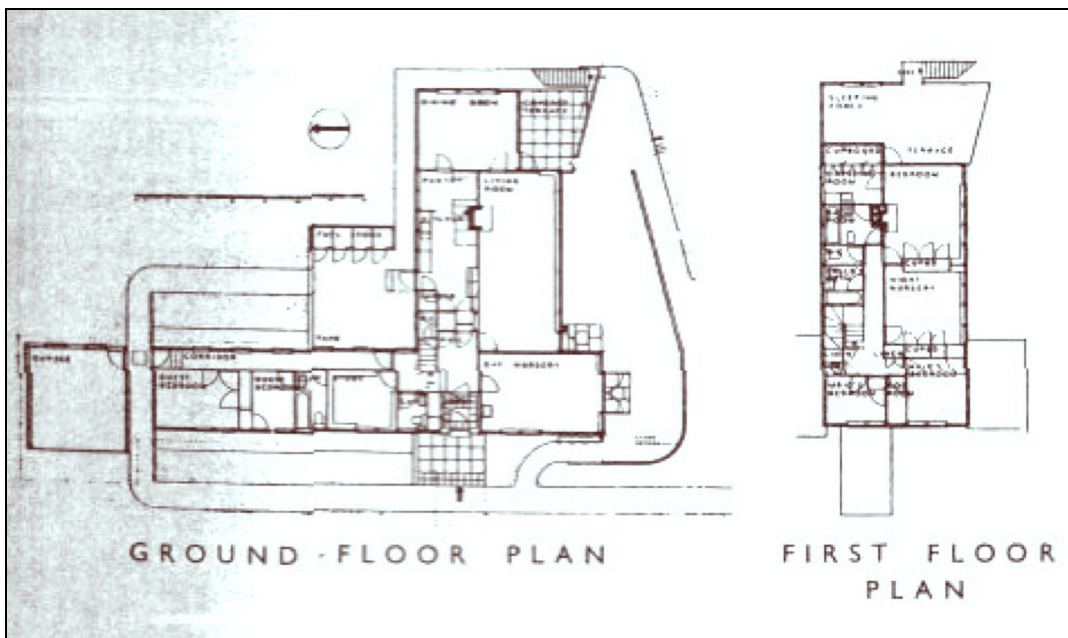


Figure 3-32. Gropius and Fry. Floor Plan of the Donaldson House, Sevenoaks, Shipbourne, 1936. "A Timber House in Kent." *The Architectural Review*. February 1938, pps.61-63.

The two-storey house is designed with an L-shaped plan (poorly reproduced above) on a sloped site that introduces four distinct skillion roofs to cover the compartmentalised zones of servants' quarters, conservatory, and the family rooms. The skillion roofs use exposed rafters painted in contrasting colours to support deep eaves to moderate the sunlight. The house also includes a terrace with external stair adjoining the master bedroom on the second storey that has been described as a "sleeping porch" or in Australian terminology, a "sleep out".³¹⁵

The Donaldson House contains a number of motifs that play a role in Arthur Baldwinson's later residential practice. He drew the floor plan for the commission and the multiple skillion roof planes, the use of unpainted weatherboard, a second storey terrace and "sleep out" accessible by an external stair, the careful adjustment of the plan to the site and the deep eaves later became important elements of his residential architecture on his return to Australia.

Gropius and Fry's next commission was the Impington Village College, Cambridgeshire. Like so many of Gropius's British commissions, the Impington Village School building was facilitated through Jack Pritchard. Pritchard, whose father had been active in the Association of Municipal Corporations, introduced Gropius to Henry Morris, the Chief Education Officer for Cambridgeshire.³¹⁶ Morris was the founder of the Village College Movement, a 20th attempt to reverse the migration of rural residents to the urban centres of England through the creation of sophisticated educational and recreation facilities in the shires. Four of these schools were ultimately completed in Cambridgeshire. The County government, private subscriptions and the donation of approximately three hectares of land funded the Impington College building, finally completed in 1939. It provided a school for 280 children, a 360-person theatre, craft workshops and a library for the shire community.

Fry observed of this commission, "We designed this latest of his [Morris's] colleges amid grave monumental trees in parkland by the village of Impington, and its open plan, leading off in three directions from a central stem, corridor, foyer and exhibition space in one, set a standard that animated all school building to follow..."³¹⁷ Fry's memoir stressed the teamwork implicit in this project and the concept is unlike Gropius's previous school work.³¹⁸

The Impington College design featured two near-parallel buildings (one straight, one with a slight curve) connected by a "promenade". Influenced in part by Le Corbusier's 1927 winning design for the League of Nations, Geneva, Gropius's wedge-shaped assembly hall/theatre seating 360 centres the architectural composition.

³¹⁵ Cormier, op.cit., p.102.

³¹⁶ Fiona MacCarthy. "Jack Pritchard and the Hampstead of the Thirties." Introduction to *View from a Long Chair. Memoirs of Jack Pritchard*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1984, pps. 9-10. Pritchard gave lectures in Australia during a visit in 1968.

³¹⁷ Maxwell Fry. op. cit., p.149.

³¹⁸ The Gropius Archive papers notes "...Gropius and Fry's first plans exceeded the allocated funds by more than 100 percent. Only after Gropius had left England could Fry rigorously cut down the project so that it became realistic, which angered Gropius." Introduction to the "Village College, Impington" in *The Walter Gropius Archive*. (vol.1-6) Winfried Nerdinger, editor. Harvard University Art Museums. 1990. Vol.3, p.8.

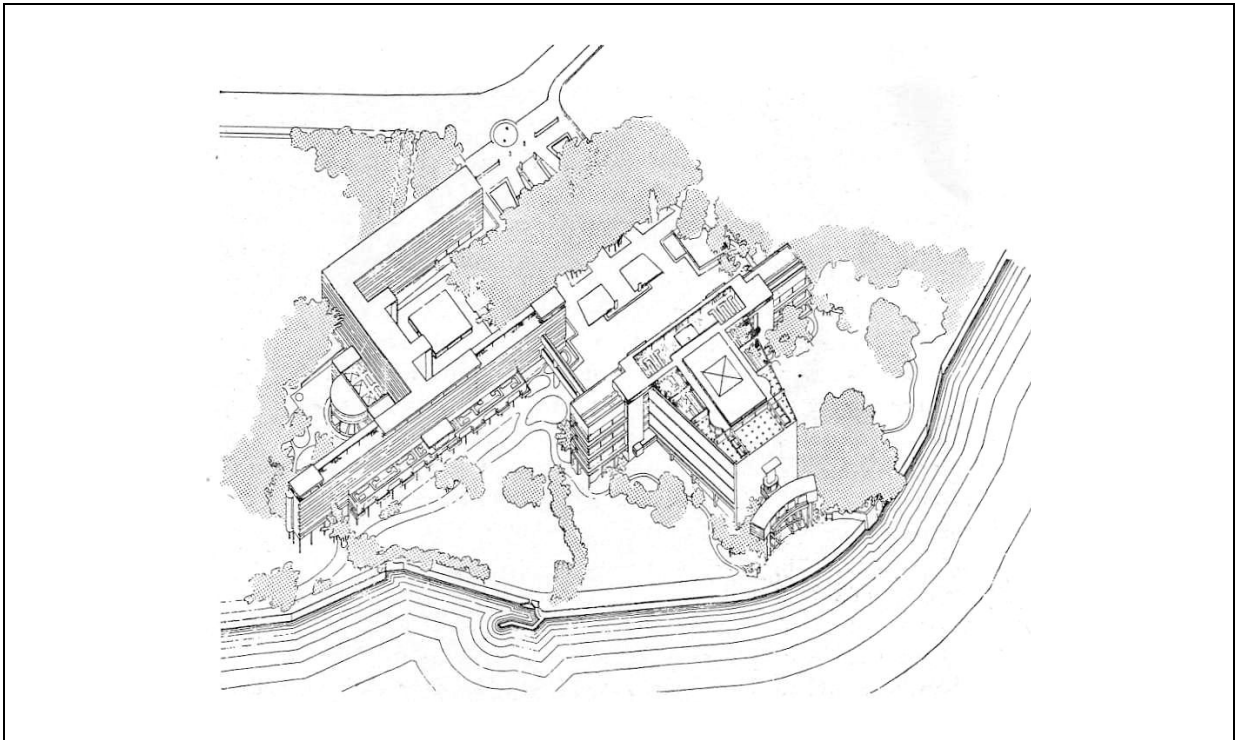


Figure 3-34. Le Corbusier. League of Nations project, 1927. Charles Jencks. *Le Corbusier*, p.113.

Le Corbusier's 1927 design had isolated and detached the individual functions of the League but linked them through a series of passages and covered ways passing through a parkland setting. The highly symbolic assembly hall is presented in a wedge shape that instantly communicates its internal functions. Similar strategies are also employed in the Impington College campus building.

The Gropius and Fry building is constructed in locally sourced light-coloured bricks laid with flush mortar pointing, expansive glass windows and sliding glass doors in the classrooms. It continued Gropius's concern with light and ventilation and the classrooms open to lightly timbered parkland on their southern elevation. Mahogany veneer plywood (courtesy of Jack "Plywood" Pritchard) clad the theatre interiors. Cost over-runs meant that while the theatre and library were built, a gymnasium was omitted from the final building. According to Holman, Arthur Baldwinson completed the first round of perspectives of Impington as well as drawing the early plans and elevations.³¹⁹ These Impington drawings now appear to be amongst the Gropius papers.³²⁰ In her research amongst the Gropius papers, Cormier has noted the stylistic differences in the presentation drawings.

³¹⁹ Interview with Jack Howe, the Gropius and Fry assistant on the Impington commission after early 1937. Holman, *op. cit.*, p.50.

³²⁰ The *Walter Gropius Archive*. (vol.1-6) Winfried Nerdinger, editor. Harvard University Art Museums. 1990. Twenty-two detailing drawings of "Village College, Impington, Cambridgeshire" are described in Vol.3, pps.8-9. None of these drawings are signed by Baldwinson.

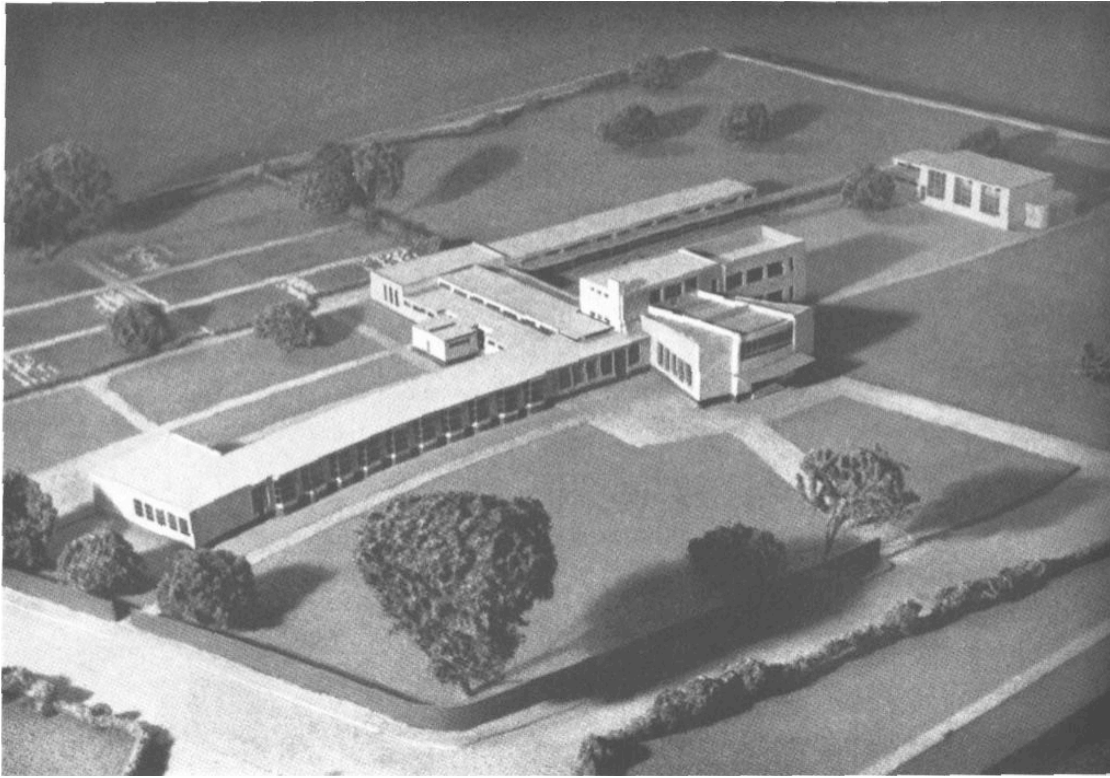


Figure 3-35. Gropius and Fry. Impington Village College Model, Cambridgeshire, 1936. Sigfried Geidion. *Walter Gropius*. Reinhold, p.130.

*Histon [another Village College project] [...] looks very much like Gropius's German drawings: a rectilinear hard-edged pen drawing [...] and little or no reference to landscape. The [...] Impington drawings, on the other hand, are charcoal and pencil renderings in shades of grey, with areas of either wash or poché, the buildings in naturalistic landscape. [...] It is likely that Gropius and his draftsman Proskauer produced the elevation for Histon in Gropius's earlier German style and that Fry [i.e. Baldwinson] had a major role in the more picturesque drawings for [...] Impington.*³²¹

Cormier, without an awareness of Gropius's assistants, particularly Baldwinson, accurately described perspectives that were almost certainly drawn by Baldwinson. The Papworth School for Tuberculosis Patients of 1936, in a similar style, also illustrated Baldwinson's capabilities in this regard.

Although no Impington drawings survive in the Baldwinson papers, Baldwinson was fond of the College and later praised the plan and concept in a 1939 article in the *Australian Timber Journal* illustrated by another of his presentation drawings of a Gropius and Fry project for the Papworth School, a similar project and plan that was not completed.³²²

³²¹ Cormier, op. cit., pps.124-125.

³²² A.N. Baldwinson. "Schools for Today." *The Australian Timber Journal*, Dec.-Jan, 1939-40, pps.746-747, 787.

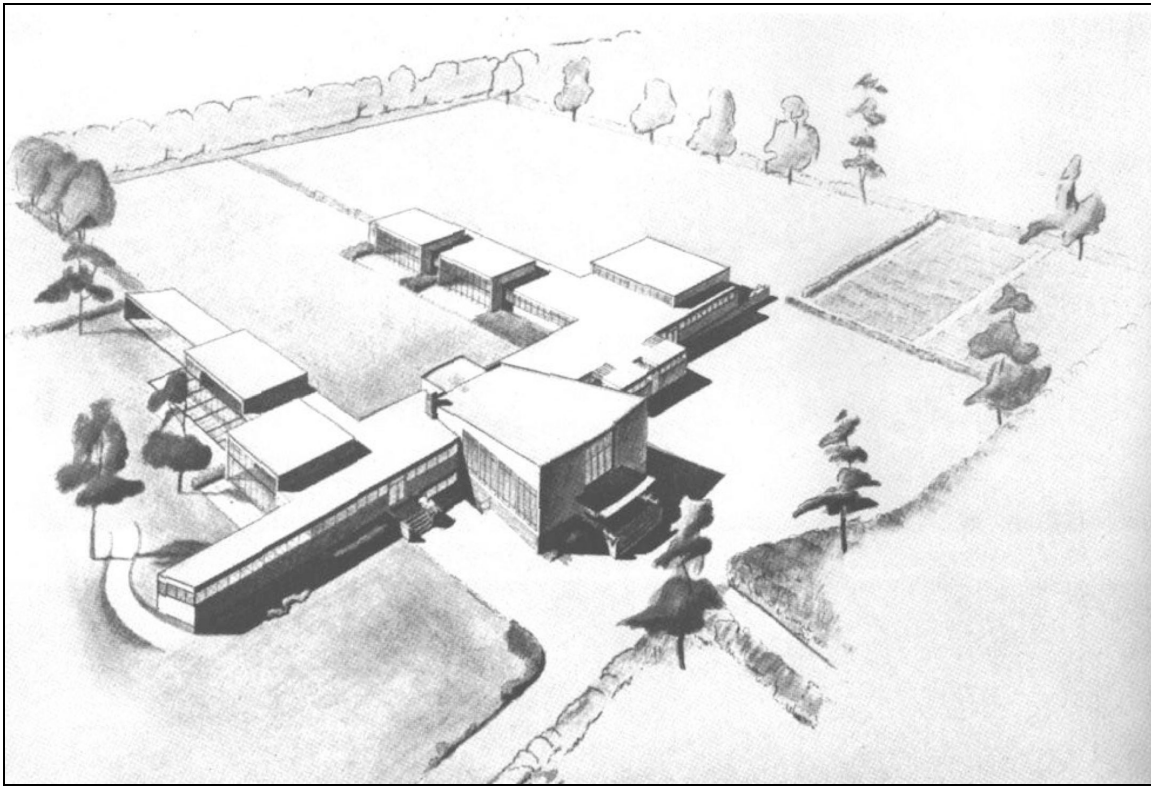


Figure 3-36. Arthur Baldwinson. Perspective, Papworth School, Cambridgeshire, Gropius and Fry, 1936. *Australian Timber Journal*, January 1939.

The design for Christ College, Cambridge is Baldwinson's last involvement with the Gropius and Fry partnership. Drawing on contacts developed during the Impington College commission and the continuing support of the *AR*, their partnership was amongst three firms invited to submit designs for the construction of a residential college at Cambridge University.

Gropius and Fry submitted elevations, perspectives and plans for a five-storey building with a rooftop residence for a street-to-street thoroughfare block requiring two major elevations: one providing shopfronts facing a commercial street; and the other addressing a university setting across a landscaped quadrangle. The perspective drawing in the style of Baldwinson illustrates the elevation addressing the quadrangle.³²³

³²³ The Gropius Archive records seven items including elevations, perspectives and sections. While no signature is noted, two perspectives are in the Baldwinson style. The *Walter Gropius Archive*. (vol.1-6) Winfried Nerdinger, editor. Harvard University Art Museums. 1990, Vol.3, pps.25-26.



Figure 3-37. Arthur Baldwinson. Perspective, Christ College, Cambridge University, 1936. Gropius and Fry Project proposal. Baldwinson papers, PXD 356, f. 2462.

The building employed a horizontal composition clad in Cambridge limestone with metal detailing. Glass bricks provide privacy and sound isolation at ground level while internal halls led to student rooms lighted with strip windows and accordion-fold doors leading to projecting balconies. The Fellows of Christ College rejected this proposal, as well as the plans of the other two architectural firms. While the 1936 deliberations of the Fellows were not made public, discussions took place over the next thirty years and the Christ College architectural commission was not awarded until the mid-1960s.

Following the collapse of this project, the Gropius and Fry partnership began to disintegrate as Gropius was increasingly distracted by his confidential negotiations for a professorship with Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts.

Baldwinson had also begun negotiations with Stephenson and Meldrum (later Stephenson and Turner) to return to Australia. According to Holman's investigations, employment as a "Design Architect" was assured by November 1936.³²⁴ Baldwinson cashed in the first class ticket provided by Stephenson and Meldrum and took an overland trip to Italy where he boarded a steamer at Naples in January 1937 for the trip to Fremantle and the eastern ports.³²⁵ Gropius left England for New England in March 1937.

³²⁴ Holman, *op cit.* p. 51.

³²⁵ *ibid.*, p.51.

CONCLUSION

While Arthur Baldwinson's work with Gropius and Fry provided him with invaluable experience, the critics have not been kind regarding Gropius's British work. With the exception of Paolo Berdini's 1994 *Gropius*, the canonical summaries of his career, *Architect Walter Gropius (chef de oeuvre)*, 1996, Reginald Isaacs's *Gropius*, 1991 and Sigfried Giedion's *Walter Gropius* pass quickly over this period. Perhaps Gropius encouraged this cursory treatment. As noted earlier, Henry-Russell Hitchcock's catalogue essay for the 1937 Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) survey of British architecture considered Maxwell Fry's residential work superior to the designs of Gropius's British period.³²⁶ There are, however, dissenters to Hitchcock's view, notably L.H. Cormier's study of Gropius's career in Britain.

Cormier's study, "Walter Gropius: Émigré Architect" considers his British interlude introduced the Bauhaus Master to a "use of materials and textures, and of materials in juxtaposition to one another" that soon becomes part of his work in the United States. And, she continues, "the Wood house, Kent, [his] first rural residential commission out of Germany, Gropius had begun his attempt to incorporate the vernacular into his modernism through his practice of driving through the countryside and noting the local forms and materials."³²⁷

Using Gropius's own house in Lincoln, Massachusetts (1937-41) as an example, Cormier writes that "The English years also effected a transformation in Gropius's sensitivity to the inter-relationships of building to landscape, [...] the house now speaks to the landscape. [...] Here it actively embraces the ground through Gropius's use of sun and wind screens as first explored at the Wood House [Kent]."³²⁸ These were lessons that Baldwinson could absorb and adapt to his later practice.

One of Baldwinson's many personal résumés modestly describes this two-year (1935-37) interval as "Architectural Assistant to Professor Walter Gropius and Maxwell Fry, Working on English Industrial Housing Schemes". Baldwinson's papers and portfolio of drawings reveal his personal involvement in Fry's Kensal House, the Gropius and Fry Levy House, Donaldson House, Impington School, and the designs for the Christ College, Cambridge commission where he was able to directly engage in the design and construction of significant residential and commercial buildings.

He was also exposed to an invaluable survey of international modernism in the Raymond McGrath practice during the assembly and production of the landmark 1934 book *Twentieth Century Houses*. He also had ample opportunity to see McGrath's residential work and particularly that of McGrath's colleague, Serge Chermayeff.

³²⁶ Hitchcock, Henry-Russell and Catherine Bauer. *Modern Architecture in England*. Museum of Modern Art, 1937. p.30.

³²⁷ Cormier, op. cit., pps.169-170.

³²⁸ *ibid.*, p.171.

Although Baldwinson's résumés (most prepared later in his career) noted that during 1932-37, he travelled to Sweden, Denmark, Germany, France, Switzerland, and Italy (the latter on his return trip to Australia), there are few records, diary entries or other recordings in the Baldwinson papers that describe or detail what he saw or what he thought about it.³²⁹ While he may have seen modernist work in Europe, he failed to discuss, respond or illustrate his continental experience in his later work. His exposure to British modernist architecture during the 1930s was the seminal event of his professional life.

Baldwinson's years in England also provided him with his first professional exposure to the importance of architectural promotion and publicity.³³⁰ In his work with the British media favourites Raymond McGrath and the Gropius and Fry practice, he came to understand the absolute necessity of sophisticated architectural photography and on his return, he was amongst the first Australian architects to use colour photography to present his work and to cultivate some of Australia's best photographers.

Through the work of *The Architectural Review* and other British publications as well as the activities of the British MARS (Modern Architecture Research group), he learned the importance of the print media in promoting architecture and design. As discussed in the following chapter, he became one of the principal organisers of the Sydney MARS group. He also gained an appreciation of the importance of film and radio in promoting architecture and design and on his return, he promoted Australian film scripts and radio broadcasts on design issues.³³¹

Baldwinson's transforming British architectural experiences have substantial influence on the architect's later work. The careful site landscape adjustments and asymmetrical axial plans of Raymond McGrath's few domestic commissions proved to be important for his work after the 1939-45 War. Gropius's "inter-relationships of building to landscape" where the house "spoke" to the landscape provided lessons that Baldwinson could absorb and adapt to his later practice.

The adaptation of weatherboard cladding in a modernist idiom practiced by Fry, McGrath and others will have major ramifications in his earliest residential commissions. The multiple planes and pitches of the skillion roofs found in Gropius's Donaldson House and McGrath's "Land's End" House will find their way into the Baldwinson vocabulary. And finally, the

³²⁹ Résumé (updated 1964). Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792.

³³⁰ By 1939, the Central Housing Advisory Committee prepared a booklet for the British Ministry of Health called *Houses we Live in* that described in prescriptive detail the modernist house (concrete construction, motor garage for the "modern" car, anti-historicist style) that the British government was promoting for health and efficiency.

³³¹ By the mid-1930s, even cinema was also beginning to play a role in the promotion of architecture. Four significant modernist documentaries (10-15 minutes) for newsreel theatre screening include: Edgar Anstey and Arthur Elton's "Housing Problems" (1935); the Ministry of Public Health's "The Great Crusade: the Story of a Million Homes" (1936); Frank Sainsbury's "Kensal House" (1937); and Paul Rotha's "New Worlds for Old" on new housing (1938). Baldwinson developed an outline of a film script (undated) for the ABC in the 1950s to be called "The Australian Home." It was to feature Harry Seidler, Baldwinson and Sydney Ancher. The concept had to wait for television and the "telegenic" Robin Boyd. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, Box 2 (5).

candid openness, scale and visual surprise of Chermayeff's own house at Bentley Wood will reappear throughout Baldwinson's professional life.

On his return to Australia, he immediately went to work refining his personal experience of British modernist architecture. As a founding member of the Sydney-based Modern Architectural Research group (MARS), he sought to share these same ideals with Australian architecture practitioners and Baldwinson soon became one of the leaders in the professional organisation and promotion of modern design.

INTRODUCTION

Arthur Baldwinson made an energetic return to Australia. In the three years between his return from England in 1937 and his 1940 wartime appointment with the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation (CAC), Baldwinson worked with Stephen & Turner in Melbourne and Sydney; he met and married Elspeth Lee-Lewes; won the 1938 Victorian Timber Development Association domestic architecture competition and established a private architectural practice in Sydney and built two significant commissions. He began his Australian architectural practice as a modernist influenced by the British and European principles he had observed firsthand in his work with Raymond McGrath's practice and later through his work with Gropius and Fry.

On his return, he was able to see new modernist work by his generation of architects in Melbourne, then later Sydney. Although Baldwinson's training and earliest career contacts were in Melbourne, he was determined to settle in Sydney upon his return. The Baldwinson papers provide no insight into his motivation to establish a practice in New South Wales. When he built, however, his designs suggested a modernism tailored to the Australian setting in their respect for the site, the use of local materials and timbers and generous outdoor spaces devoted to verandahs and patios. Baldwinson's pre-war work was unlike any residential design seen in the Sydney region. Unfortunately for Sydney domestic architecture, some of his more radical designs from this period remained unbuilt projects.

Baldwinson also returned to Australia charged with a reforming zeal for the general principles of modernist architecture and industrial design; he was determined to continue the reforms in design in New South Wales that he had experienced in Britain. These reforms are explored in Chapter 5.

THE MELBOURNE MILIEU ON BALDWINSON'S RETURN

Regardless of Baldwinson's final intentions, he moved between Melbourne and Sydney from February 1937 when he established his own practice in the seaside suburb of Manly in October 1938. On his return, he would have acquainted himself with new Melbourne design and construction.

Stephen & Turner

Stephenson & Meldrum (soon to be Stephenson & Turner) made Baldwinson an offer of employment in late 1936 as a "Chief Architectural Designer" although this impressive title is not supported in Baldwinson's personal résumé.³³² Baldwinson began the association with Stephenson & Meldrum (later Turner) in their Melbourne office in February 1937.³³³

³³² Baldwinson left Europe via Naples in January 1937 for Australia. Holman is able to cite Baldwinson's letter of acceptance stating, "...that after a period of eighteen months he would leave them to establish private practice." To date, this letter cannot be located in the Baldwinson papers. Holman, *op. cit.*, pps.51-52.

³³³ Holman, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

Baldwinson's 1935 address diary records that he and Meldrum had been acquainted in Victoria before his departure for Britain.³³⁴

In their Melbourne office in 1937, Baldwinson would have found the architects Mary (Molly) Turner-Shaw, Arthur Noad, Horace Tribe, Tom O'Mahony (his fellow Gordon student, destined to be Baldwinson's obituary writer), Rae Featherstone (flatmate in England), John Fisher, Oscar Bayne and others. The firm recruited well.



Figure 4-1. Arthur Baldwinson (circled). Detail of Stephenson & Turner's Sydney staff. In John Shaw, *Sir Arthur Stephenson, Australian Architect*.

Stephenson & Turner was considered the premiere modernist firm in Australia at this time. As Philip Goad has noted, "[Arthur Stephenson] is the crucial and paternal sponsor of not only one but various modernisms in Australian architecture. [...] It is Arthur Stephenson's role not as an aesthete but as an advocate and patron of progressive young talent that enabled the creation of a new architectural identity of the public face of Australian architecture."³³⁵

The Stephenson & Meldrum practice had begun in 1921 in Melbourne, expanding with commercial clients such as the State Saving Bank and the Victorian community health care

³³⁴ Baldwinson papers. MLMSS 7792, Arthur Baldwinson address diary, 1935.

³³⁵ Philip Goad. "Collusions of Modernity. Australian Pavilions in New York and Wellington." *Fabrications*. 10: August 1999. pps.22-45.

industry.³³⁶ Following Arthur Stephenson's overseas travel in 1932-33 researching modern innovations in hospitals, the firm's practice was transformed: "Instantly the language the firm had used in designing their large hospitals changed to a strong modernism..."³³⁷ The company reformed as Stephenson & Turner in 1937 after the original partner Percy Meldrum resigned.³³⁸ Their Sydney office had opened in 1934.

Julie Willis notes that Stephenson met Erich Mendelsohn in Berlin and received a conducted tour of his family's *Am Rupenhorn* villa.³³⁹ Significantly for Stephenson, he would also have seen Mendelsohn's recently completed Berlin work, the *Columbushaus* and its roof-level restaurant which suggests a contribution to the detailing of his firm's E. S. & A. Bank rooftop restaurant, Melbourne as well as the design development of the ACI building in Sydney.

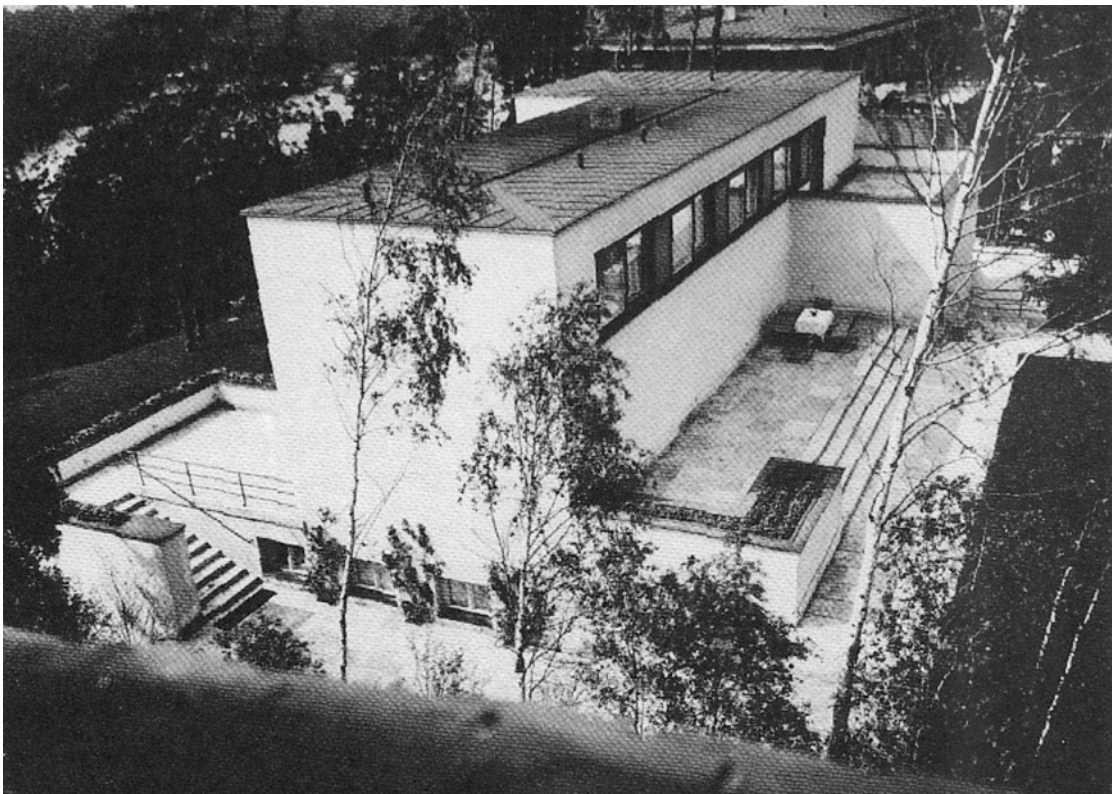


Figure 4-2. Erich Mendelsohn. *Am Rupenhorn* Villa, 1932. Regina Stephan. *Eric Mendelsohn, Architect 1887-1953*, p.177.

It has been suggested by Philip Goad and others that the German émigré Frederick Romberg, who joined the firm in 1938, was responsible for the design for the E.S.&A. Bank's

³³⁶ Julie Willis. "The Health of Modernism." in Philip Goad, R. Wilken and J. Willis. *Australian Modern. The Architecture of Stephenson & Turner*, Melbourne University Press, 2004.

³³⁷ *ibid.*, p.17.

³³⁸ John Shaw. *Sir Arthur Stephenson (1890-1967)*. Stephenson and Turner, 1967, p.24.

³³⁹ Philip Goad, R. Wilken and J. Willis. *Australian Modern. The Architecture of Stephenson & Turner*, Melbourne University Press, 2004, p.16.

restaurant design.³⁴⁰ As a Swiss-trained modernist, Romberg would have been well aware of the work of Mendelsohn. Baldwinson would also have had the opportunity to become familiar with his work after the young architect arrived in Britain.



Figure 4-3. Eric Mendelsohn. Restaurant balcony, roof terrace, *Columbushaus*, Berlin, 1932. Regina Stephan. *Eric Mendelsohn, Architect 1887-1953*, p.136, (left), Stephenson & Meldrum. E.S. & A Bank. Restaurant balcony, roof terrace, Melbourne, 1939. Goad, et al. *Australian Modern*, p.48.

In 1937, the office was involved in the Royal Melbourne Hospital, Parkville and the Royal Women's Hospital, Carlton, the United Dental Hospital, Sydney and the English, Scottish and Australian Bank (E. S. & A. Bank), Collins Street, Melbourne. Baldwinson "took over the task of design studies and presentation previously held by Horace Tribe."³⁴¹ Tribe, a Swinburne Technical College graduate, had been involved in the practice's larger projects as well as the "Spirit of Progress" streamlined passenger train for the Victorian railways.³⁴²

³⁴⁰ Harriet Edquist, editor. *The Architecture of Migration. 1939-1975*. RMIT University Press, 2000, p.18.

³⁴¹ Holman, op. cit., p.56.

³⁴² "Horace Tribe." *Architecture and Arts and the Modern Home*, November 1955, p.17.

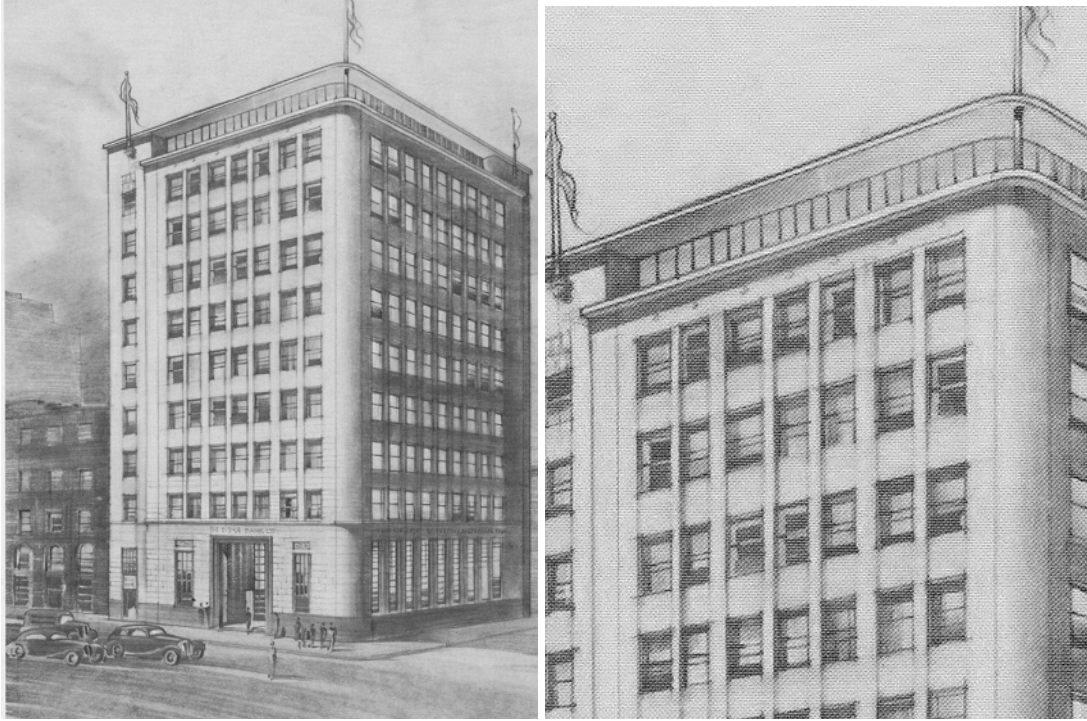


Figure 4-4. Gordon H. Morten, Stephenson & Turner. E.S.&A. Bank and detail of Restaurant Terrace level, 1939. La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria. Goad, et al. *Australian Modern*, p.70.

Ellison Harvie, later a senior partner in Stephenson & Turner, recalled a Baldwinson rendering of the E. S. & A. Bank in a 1980 interview.³⁴³ A perspective drawing for this building is, however, in the distinctive style of Stephenson & Turner's "GHM" (Gordon H. Morten), a prolific designer and illustrator responsible for many of this practice's soft pencil renderings during this period.³⁴⁴ His "GHM" signature appears as initials or occasionally in the form of a monogram or cartouche on the drawings.

While Baldwinson's architectural interests were oriented toward residential work, the commercial scale of the Stephenson & Turner practice offered many opportunities for developing his skills in design studies and presentation. Although Baldwinson was well prepared for the next stage in his professional practice, his work reflected the demands of the Australian clientele and continued in the traditions of his 1929 Myer Emporium renderings for Tompkins, Shaw & Evans.³⁴⁵

Baldwinson's signed ("ANB") presentation drawings for Stephenson & Turner's Darwin Hotel were, however, published in the architectural press and provided a distinctive contrast

³⁴³ Holman, op. cit., p.57.

³⁴⁴ Illustrated by Goad, et al in the "Australian Modern" 2004 exhibition on Stephenson & Turner at the State Library of Victoria. A number of CHM drawings were included in the 2004 exhibition at the State Library of Victoria and the accompanying catalogue.

³⁴⁵ Myer Emporium signed drawing for Tompkins, Shaw & Evans, 1929, State Library of Victoria, no. H2006, 105/13.

to the style of the firm's "GHM" presentation work.³⁴⁶ Baldwinson's stylistic treatment of vegetation and human figures developed in Britain remained distinctive. His drawings show outstanding visualisation skills.

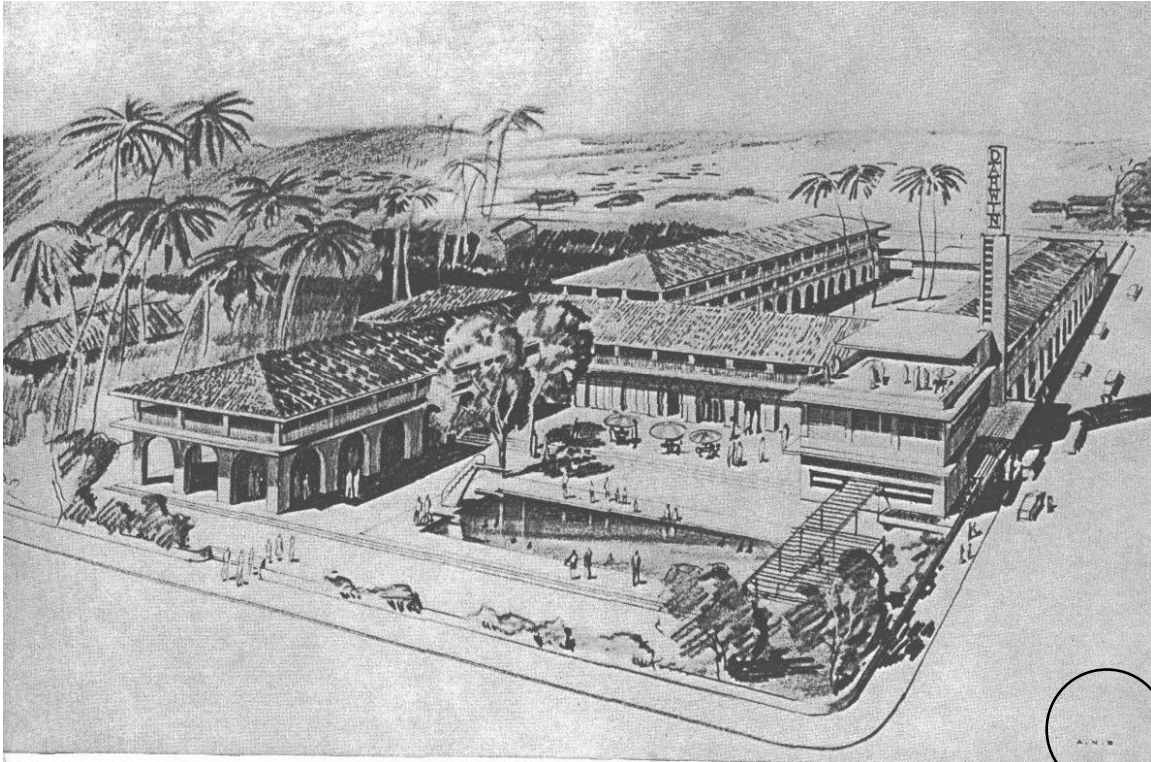


Figure 4-5. Arthur Baldwinson. The original Darwin Hotel proposal rendering for Stephen & Turner (Signed ANB in lower right, circled), 1939. *Australia National Journal*, No. 1, Winter 1939.

Unfortunately for Stephenson & Turner, the original design for the Darwin Hotel was not constructed. Located on Darwin's Esplanade with unimpeded views to the bay and the Arafura Sea, the hotel was not constructed to the original scale and design of the Stephenson & Turner plans.

The Darwin Hotel's intimations of Indo-Malay colonial architecture, the massive masonry walls, deep eaves and the fan-cooled open plan public bar on the ground floor gave it legendary Northern Territory status. The Hotel withstood epic public drunkenness, tropical storms and Japanese aerial bombings during the 1939-45 War to finally perish in a Northern Territory-government-supported demolition in 1999.

³⁴⁶ *Journal of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects*. Vol. 35, July 1939. Two illustrations also appear in *Australia National Journal*, No. 1, Winter 1939.



Figure 4-6. Arthur Baldwinson. The original Hotel Darwin proposal rendering from the Esplanade for Stephen & Turner. (Signed ANB in lower right, circled). *Journal of the RVIA*, 35: July 1939.



Figure 4-7. The Darwin Hotel from the Esplanade. ca.1940. Photograph by John Flynn. National Library of Australia, no. 24397844.

After six months in Melbourne, Baldwinson transferred to the Sydney office in August 1937 where the new partner Donald Turner was now in charge.³⁴⁷ In the following years, the Sydney office was involved in major projects such as the United Dental Hospital, Surry Hills (1938-40), the King George V Hospital, Camperdown, the new corporate headquarters of Australian Consolidated Industries (ACI), East Sydney and exhibition work for the New York World's Fair.³⁴⁸



Figure 4-8. Stephenson & Turner. The Australian Consolidated Industries (ACI) Building, William and Boomerang Streets, Sydney. *Decoration and Glass*. December 1943.

³⁴⁷ Holman, op. cit., p.59-60. Authorities differ on the date of the foundation of the Sydney office.

³⁴⁸ Australian Consolidated Industries (ACI) was created in January 1939. ACI commissioned a new corporate headquarters to establish a presence in the market. ACI was a holding company of subsidiaries that manufactured items such as bottles, glassware and sheet glass.

While Holman assigns major design work on the King George V Hospital portico, the Dental Hospital and the ACI building to the architect, there is no documentary evidence in the Baldwinson papers supporting this attribution. Baldwinson's papers conclusively reveal, however, that he was responsible for the ACI trade displays on the ground floor lobby of this building. This included the design of the entrance lobby pavement incorporating glass elements, a glass dome containing samples of ACI products and a glass mosaic (all removed).³⁴⁹ The trade displays were an essential part of the new corporate headquarters of ACI and the façade featured the generous use of glass bricks and a cladding of burnt orange glass tiles.



Figure 4-9. Stephenson & Turner. A corner composition similar to that of the well known Flatiron Building (1902), Daniel Burnham, Architect, 5th Avenue and 22nd Street, New York. The United Dental Hospital, Elisabeth and Chalmers Streets, Sydney, 1940. State Library of NSW (left).

Baldwinson, who was systematically cataloguing his drawings at the time of his death, included no drawings of the King George V portico, the iconic ACI Building and the United Dental Hospital. There are no references to work on these two buildings in his personal papers, résumés or his personal lists of projects. While there is no evidence that Baldwinson was involved in the original designs, he may, however, have been involved in preparing presentation drawings for these structures. This led to the attributions in Holman's thesis, repeated in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* citation for Baldwinson by Richard Apperly and Peter Reynolds, reproduced in Graham Jahn's guidebook *Sydney Architecture* and other sources.

Baldwinson's skill were soon needed again in the Melbourne practice and by September 1937 he rejoined that office where the design work for Australian Pavilion for the New

³⁴⁹ Baldwinson papers, PXD 356, ff.414-416.

Zealand Centennial Exhibition (1939-40) in Wellington was underway.³⁵⁰ His verified design contribution to the New Zealand Centennial Exhibition consists of drawings for attendant's tables and details, a drawing of the ground floor plan and a section through the pavilion.³⁵¹ The Powerhouse Museum holds four drawings of some of the furnishings of the Wellington Pavilion dated 24 May 1939, but these are not in the Baldwinson illustration style.³⁵² They are also dated after Baldwinson had formally left the practise in October 1938.



Figure 4-10. John Oldham. Gouache sketch of a section of the Australian Pavilion at the New York World's Fair. Undated, ca.1938. The John Oldham Collection, Perth.

Baldwinson stayed in Melbourne until March 1938 when he once again transferred to Sydney.³⁵³ The Sydney office was busy with a number of projects, most notably, the interior design and fit-out of the Australian Pavilion for the 1939 New York World's Fair. The Australian Pavilion was included in the British Commonwealth grouping and the Dominions of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Bermuda, Burma and Jamaica were organised within this Commonwealth complex.³⁵⁴

³⁵⁰ Baldwinson returned as a newly wed architect having met and married Elspeth Lee Lewes (1904-1991), originally from Victoria, but resident in Sydney. They were married in September, 1937. Baldwinson's 1937 address diary records her address as the "Macquarie", 12 Tusculum Street, Potts Point.

³⁵¹ Baldwinson papers, PXD 356, ff.417-421.

³⁵² Interview and inspection of works with curator Ann Stephen, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, 5 March 2004.

³⁵³ Holman, op. cit., p.62.

³⁵⁴ The development and completion of the NY World's Fair interiors is discussed in Michael Bogle. "Building a Better World of Tomorrow with the Tools of Today." *Form/Work*. 3: November 1999. University of Technology, Sydney. pps.71-79.

The British government engaged Stanley Hall & Easton and Robertson, a British architectural firm, to design and construct the structure and exterior of the Australian Pavilion.³⁵⁵ The building proved to be standard exhibition fare. The “Australian Design Committee” appointed by the Commonwealth government, however, oversaw the Australian content within the pavilion. This Committee initially included the arts publisher Sydney Ure Smith (chair), Russell Roberts (principal of the advertising agency “Russell Roberts P/L”), the artist Douglas Annand and West Australian designer John Oldham as well as Donald Turner and A.G. Stephenson from Stephenson & Turner. Oldham was responsible for directing and overseeing the Pavilion's interior design.³⁵⁶

Annand (later a Baldwinson client) took a leading role in the display design, using murals by himself and Adrian Feint and wildflower paintings by Margaret Preston. Geoff and Dahl Collings, two Australian-trained designers (later Baldwinson clients in the post-war period) recently returned from London also developed some of the wool display modules. John Oldham's team in Sydney and Melbourne designed and constructed the essential elements of the exhibition as a prefabricated unit. Before its departure for New York, it was assembled at the Sydney Showgrounds, and then packed down for shipping to the USA.

Former Stephenson & Turner employee Oldham recalled in his unpublished memoir Baldwinson's role:

*Arthur Baldwinson was one of the foremost contemporary designers in Sydney [...]. As well as a talented designer he was brilliant at presentation. His job at Stephenson & Turner like mine had been with Harold Krantz [in Perth] [as a designer illustrator.]. We became friends and I learned a lot from him. I was wondering how I would fit in, when a new job came along, The Australian Pavilion at the New York World Fair. We had 18 months to complete it by September 1939. Arthur Baldwinson was fully occupied so the job was given to me.*³⁵⁷

Baldwinson's design role for the New York World's Fair appears to be restricted to the distinctive tables and chairs used within the pavilion. The chairs, constructed in Sydney by Edward Hill and Company, Devonshire Street, Surry Hills, featured moulded plywood in selected Australian timber veneers. Each chair was identified by the timber veneer used in its final construction and designed to promote the unique qualities of Australian timbers. The New York World's Fair furniture drawings are dated September 1939 suggesting that Baldwinson continued to work on selected Stephenson & Turner projects after he began private practice.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁵ As mentioned in the previous chapter, Howard Robertson of this practice was the Principal of the London Architectural Association and married to the Australian architect Doris Lewis from Sydney. See Julie Willis and Bronwyn Hanna. *Women Architects in Australia 1900-1950*.

³⁵⁶ Michael Bogle. "Building a Better World of Tomorrow with the Tools of Today.", op. cit.

³⁵⁷ John Oldham. Unpublished Memoir. Transcript provided by Oldham's daughter, Ms Tish Oldham, accessed April 2005.

³⁵⁸ Baldwinson papers, PXD 356, ff.427-429 (Job No.32).

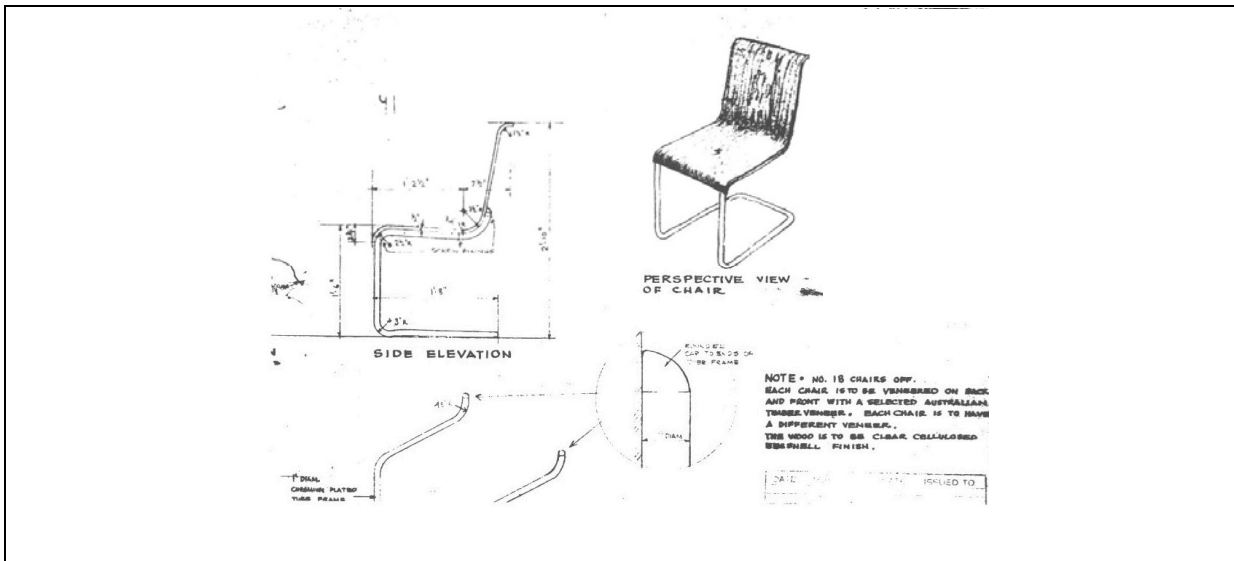


Figure 4-11. Arthur Baldwinson. Design for cantilevered chairs for the NY World's Fair, 1938. Baldwinson papers, PXD 356, ff.427-429.



Figure 4-12. Alvar Aalto. Cantilevered chair in moulded timber, 1932-33 (left). Arthur Baldwinson cantilevered chair and table, 1938 for Stephenson & Turner. Australian Archives SP153/3 (right).

There has been some question regarding the ultimate design direction for the pavilion interior but in 1996, Oldham confirmed his role as design director of the interior of Stephenson &

Turner's New York Pavilion. "I was responsible for the overall design," he later wrote, "as a member of the staff of Stephenson & Turner."³⁵⁹

In conclusion, while Stephenson & Turner were producing some outstanding civic architecture in the late 1930s, Arthur Baldwinson's direct design role in these projects cannot be determined from the surviving documentation in the Baldwinson papers at the State Library of NSW or the catalogue of the Stephenson & Turner archive at the State Library of Victoria.

On the other hand, Baldwinson's role is well documented in the development of the practice's presentation drawings and design development sketch plans. In addition to his furniture design for Wellington and New York, as well as the trade display for the ACI Building, Sydney, Baldwinson's papers include copies of his presentation drawings for the Darwin Hotel, Wellington Hospital, New Zealand and Torrumbarry, an as-yet unidentified Stephenson & Turner villa design.

It is clear from Stephenson & Turner staff interviews and the documentation that Baldwinson was principally involved in design development and presentation. "He had particular talents in presentation of drawings, producing perspectives and publicity drawings for reproduction," Ellison Harvie noted in a later interview.³⁶⁰

Baldwinson's intentions were clear when he joined Stephenson & Meldrum (later Stephenson & Turner); he did not intend to build a career with this prestigious firm. His British work suggests that his preference was for residential architecture. As a result, there was little about the scale and style of Stephenson & Turner work that complemented his design concerns. With Stephenson & Turner's blessing, he continued to develop his residential design work through a series of three entries in the Timber Design Association's (TDA) 1937 competition. By mid-1938, he was announced the TDA winner in three residential categories, he had found his first formal residential client and established a private practice.

MELBOURNE MODERNISTS ON BALDWINSON'S RETURN

As well as Stephenson & Turner, there were a number of other Melbourne modernist architects with relevance to Baldwinson's later practice. Amongst these figures were Best Overend, Friedrich (Fritz) Janeba, Roy Grounds and Frederick Romberg.

When Baldwinson returned to Melbourne with Stephenson & Turner in February 1937, Best Overend's career was advancing.³⁶¹ Overend and Baldwinson had earlier opportunities to become acquainted during their Melbourne studies. Overend's interlude in Britain (1931-1933) also overlapped with Baldwinson's employment with Raymond McGrath office (shared with Wells Coates, Overend's employer) during the BBC interior design

³⁵⁹ Interview with John Oldham 4 April 1996, correspondence from John Oldham, 8 May 1996.

³⁶⁰ Holman, op. cit., p.65

³⁶¹ This career summary relies on Philip Goad. "Best Overend. Pioneer Modernist in Melbourne." *Fabrications*. 6: June 1995, pps.101-124.

commissions discussed in the previous chapter. Their friendship is also documented by a modest correspondence in the Baldwinson papers.

After Overend's return to Melbourne in 1933, he joined the practice of Taylor and Soilleux to form H. Vivian Taylor, Soilleux and Overend and became H. Tatlock Miller's new "Architectural Editor" at *Manuscripts*.³⁶² H. Vivian Taylor, Soilleux and Overend's practice included the construction of a number of cinemas in the Moderne style. While Baldwinson's views on the streamlined Moderne architectural style were resoundingly negative, Overend was involved in other residential projects better suited to Baldwinson's aesthetics.³⁶³



Figure 4-13. H. Vivian Taylor, Soilleux and Overend. Padua Theatre, Brunswick, Victoria, 1937. Photo by Lyle Fowler. State Library of Victoria. No. a18042.

H. Vivian Taylor, Soilleux and Overend's celebrated Cairo Flats (1935-36) opposite Carlton Gardens, Fitzroy is an enthusiastic architectural essay of Overend's experiences in British modernism. In 1938, Overend also designed at least two residential projects for a Timber Development Association (TDA) competition that also show him as a convincing modernist.³⁶⁴ This same TDA competition was won by Baldwinson.

³⁶² Overend is listed as "Architectural Editor" by volume 12, *Manuscripts*, February 1935

³⁶³ A lecture on "Contemporary Trends in Architecture" given on 21 November 1947 to the Contemporary Art Society, Sydney, dismissed the style as "barren". "...picture theatres ornate with heavy fins and zig-zags..."

³⁶⁴ Timber Design Association. *Modern Homes In Timber*, 1938-39. Overend designs appear on pps. 12 and 31. A brief history of the Timber Design Association is provided in the appendix.

Although these 1938 Overend projects were not built, they show Overend as a practitioner of the flat roof and the timber-framed window wall.³⁶⁵ While these are generic modernist devices shared by both architects, a later 1939 commission for the Koornong School, in the Melbourne suburb of Warrandyte, Victoria when Overend was in private practice is also consistent with Baldwinson's residential practice.

As Goad's survey of Overend's career reveals, the architect received the commission from J.C. (Clive) and Janet Nield for an alternative boarding school in rugged bushland near the Yarra River.³⁶⁶ Skillion-roofed timber dormitory and classroom buildings set on pylons and piers were sensitively sited across the slopes with separate structures for the head of school, cooking and dining facilities and an arts area.³⁶⁷

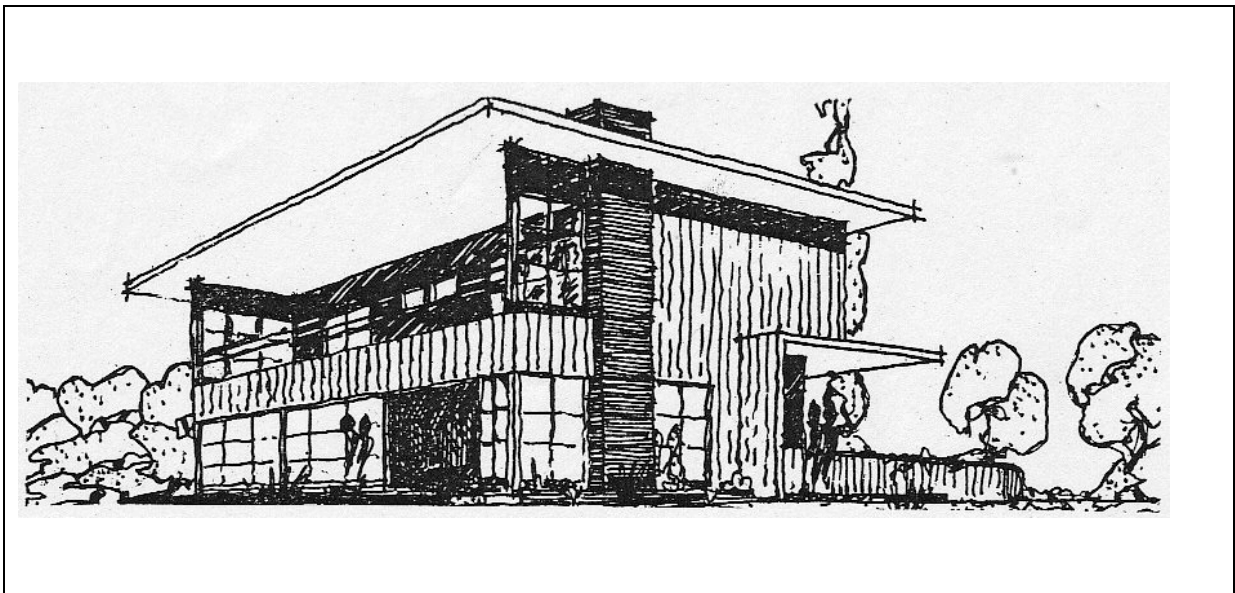


Figure 4-14. Best Overend. Residential project. Estimated Cost £850, 1938. Timber Development Association. *Modern Homes in Timber*, p.31.

A number of the timber structures were designed with internally clad externally exposed wall frame studs in the unusual Northern NSW and Queensland manner.³⁶⁸ Although climate commonly restricts this building technique to warmer climates, Overend used this unusual timber construction for some of the Koornong buildings. The use of timber cladding, opposing skillion roof plans, fieldstone foundations and stained timbers found at Koornong were also part of Baldwinson's British-derived residential design vocabulary in the late 1930s.

³⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.12 and 31.

³⁶⁶ J.C. Nield is the father of Sydney architect, Lawrence Nield of Bligh Voller Nield.

³⁶⁷ 1999 Memoir from former student Douglas Probert regarding Koornong, www.cs.mu.oz.au/~lee/era/KoornongXrecollections.txt. 3 Jan. 2006.

³⁶⁸ A building form also used by Harold Desbrowe-Annear.

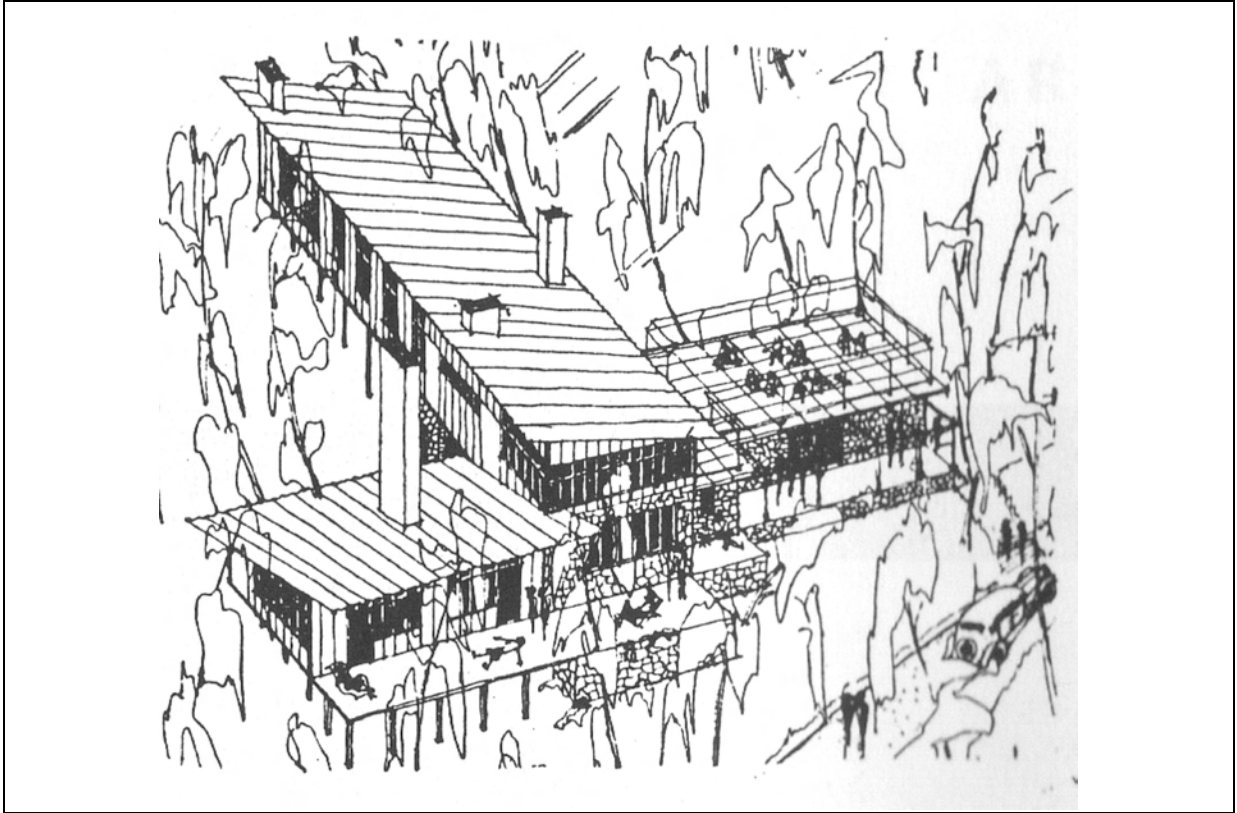


Figure 4-15. Best Overend. Sketch of the Koornong School Dining Facility, ca. 1940. Robin Boyd. *Victorian Modern*, p.48.

Despite his experience, the disciplined European modernism that Overend developed for his project designs, sketches and frequent forays into journalism (*Australian Home Beautiful*, [*The Melbourne*] *Argus*, *Manuscripts*) was rarely carried to completion. As Goad noted, “His modernism was a way of thinking, a mood, [...] a modernism that was to be professed as well as built.”³⁶⁹

³⁶⁹ Philip Goad. “Best Overend. Pioneer Modernist in Melbourne.” *Fabrications*. 6:June 1995, p.120.



Figure 4-16. Best Overend. Two modular projecting bays enclose the entrance verandah at the weatherboard-clad headmaster's house, Koornong School, ca. 1940. Sliding timber-framed sash windows are used. October 2006.

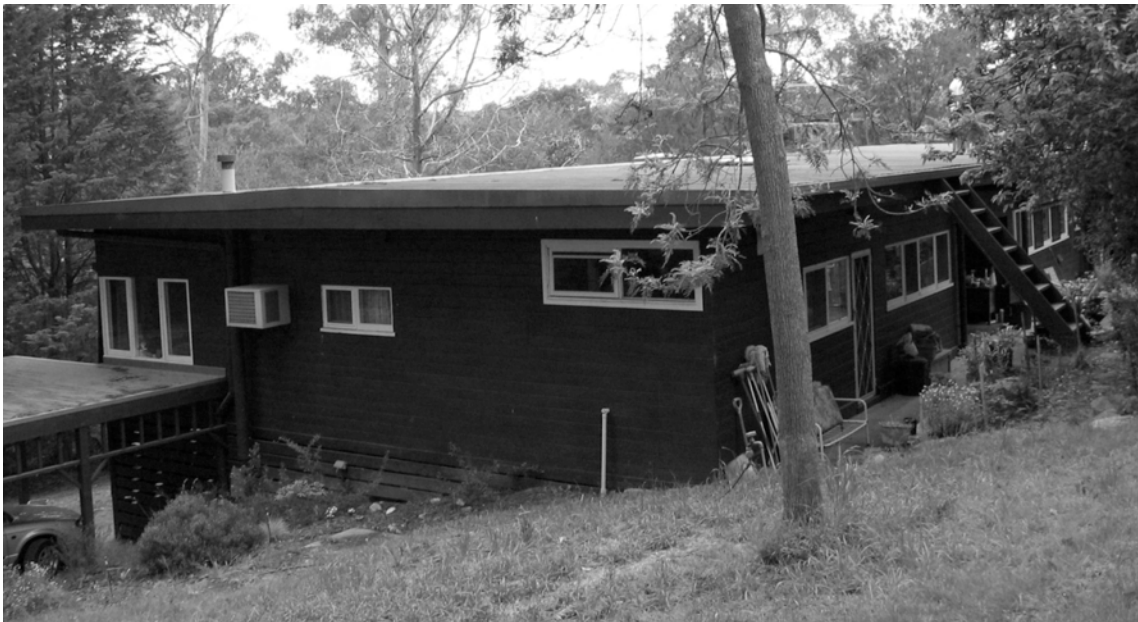


Figure 4-17. Best Overend. Rear view. Unlike many of the other Koornong structures (destroyed in a bushfire), the headmaster's house has a low-pitched gable roof, ca. 1940. A low rectilinear chimney (screened by the tree) uses local fieldstone. October 2006.

Friedrich (Fritz) Janeba, an Austrian exile who immigrated to Australia with the assistance of the Victorian Refugee Council was initially associated with Best Overend's work on the Koornong School.³⁷⁰ Janeba provided a series of signed working drawings for the school during 1939.³⁷¹ He trained in the European style of modernism working under Peter Behrens at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, later became a lecturer in design at the University of Melbourne.³⁷² While the 1920s work of the German architect Peter Behrens seems to have influenced Janeba's earliest Melbourne work, the 1939 Moran House, Toorak house shown below; by the early 1940s Janeba began to reshape his practice around local materials and methods.

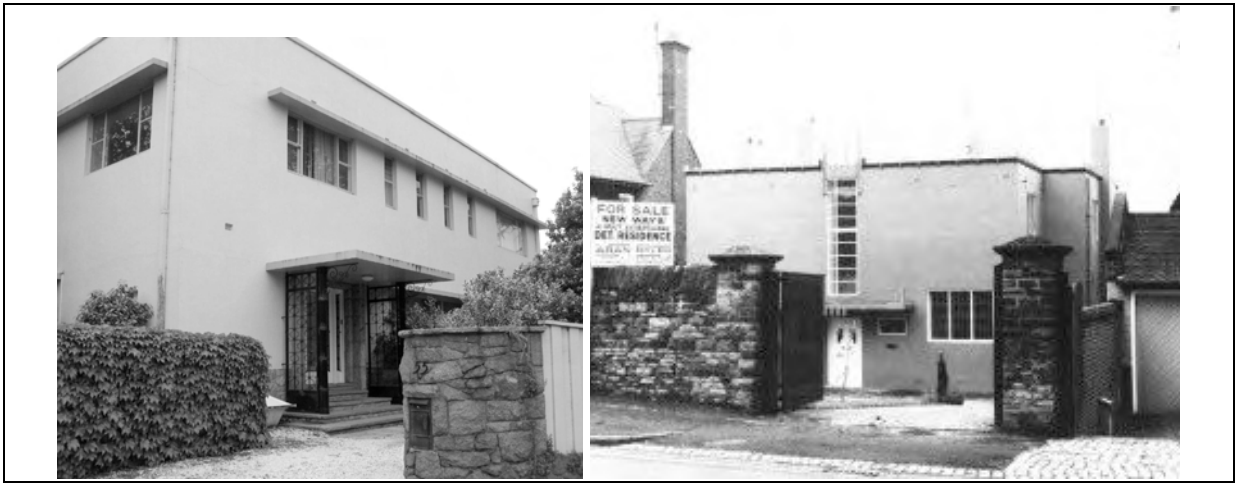


Figure 4-18. Friedrich (Fritz) Janeba. Moran House, Toorak, 1939. Photo 2006. (left). Peter Behrens, 1925-26. New Ways, Northampton, England (right).

While Janeba's direct associations with Baldwinson are unknown, some of Janeba's architectural work in the early 1940s had stylistic associations with the work of Baldwinson. His Wigley House, Warrandyte of the early 1940s, for example, shows Janeba's continuing use of the skillion roof form and timber cladding, fieldstone blade walls and terraced siting employed by Baldwinson in Sydney that suggest these elements were shared modernist characteristics.

While no direct claim can currently be supported regarding Janeba's influence on Baldwinson or vice versa, his work illustrates the currency of their shared Europe-derived residential architecture styles and their speedy adaptation to the Australian setting.

³⁷⁰ Hugh O'Neill. "On File. Friedrich Alois Janeba." *Transition*. v.36/37: 1991, pps. 136-147. Hugh O'Neill. *ibid.*, p.140.

³⁷¹ Philip Goad, *op. cit.*, p.124.

³⁷² Hugh O'Neill. *op. cit.*, pps. 136-147.

And if the timber cladding taken up by English residential modernism in the 1930s was driven by the German designer Konrad Wachsmann's book, *Building the Wooden House*, Wachsmann's movement also travelled well.³⁷³ Timber cladding and framing are present in the earliest modernist work of the Victorians Best Overend, Romberg, Roy Grounds, Janeba and others.

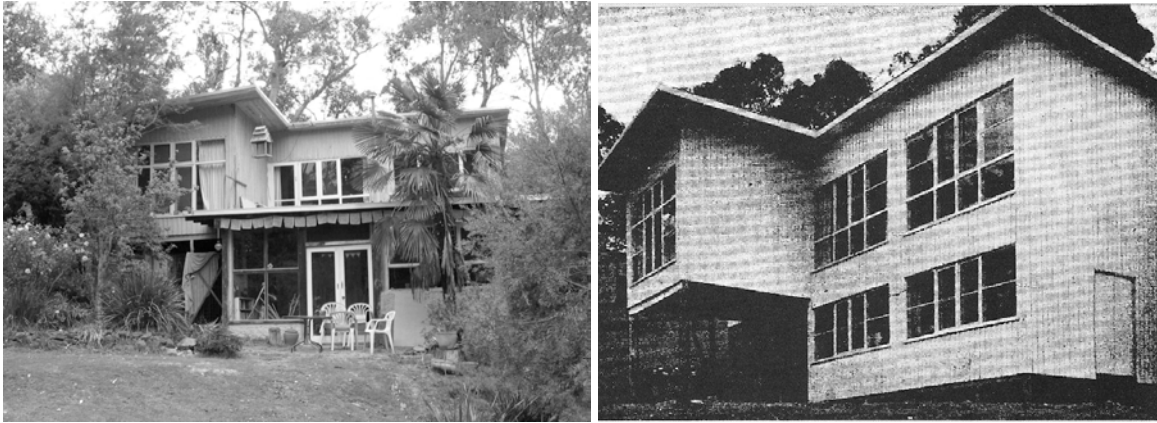


Figure 4.19. Friedrich (Fritz) Janeba. Janeba House and Office, Warrandyte, 1949. October 2006 (left) Janeba House and Office, (right). *Australian Home Beautiful*, December 1949, p.25.

Unlike Janeba's tangential associations with Baldwinson, another German-speaking émigré Frederick Romberg has a definitive association with Baldwinson through their joint employment at Stephenson & Turner in 1938.³⁷⁴ Although born in Germany, Romberg had trained in architecture at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich where he was directly exposed to the work of major European modernists such as Le Corbusier and Berthold Lubetkin in London through study tours in his final year at university in 1938.³⁷⁵

Romberg's Swiss study also exposed him to the "heimatstil" tradition of Germanic vernacular architecture taught by the conservative faculty member Fredrick Hess.³⁷⁶ "Heimatstil" at its most doctrinaire favours the use of local materials such as wood and freestone, painted ornamental schemes, traditional roofing materials such as thatch and slate, the revival of the so-called "Dutch Door" and other elements of "rusticity" such as the incorporation of logs or split timbers into the structure.

During Romberg's time at Stephenson & Turner from October 1938 to December 1939, he and Baldwinson and both played a role in the New Zealand Centennial Exhibition (1939-40). Romberg was appointed job captain while Baldwinson moved back and forth between the new Sydney office and Melbourne working on a range of projects. Baldwinson left the firm

³⁷³ Konrad Wachsmann. *Building the Wooden House*. Birkhauser, 1995 (English translation) edition. Original edition 1930.

³⁷⁴ Harriet Edquist, editor. *The Architecture of Migration*. 1939-1975. RMIT University Press, 2000, p.17.

³⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p.15.

³⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p.15.

in the same month that Romberg had joined it but continued to work on their projects while establishing his solo practice.

After Romberg left Stephenson & Turner, he formed a short-lived partnership (1939-45) with fellow Stephenson & Turner architect Mary (Molly) Turner Shaw to design and construct the ambitious four-storey Newburn Flats (1939), Queens Road, Melbourne in a reinforced concrete modernist style. This partnership continued to work in innovative medium density flats, among them, the bagged brick Glenunga Flats (1940), 2 Horsburg Grove, Armadale.



Figure 4-20. Frederick Romberg and Mary Turner Shaw. Glenunga Flats, 2 Horsburg Grove, Armadale, 1940. Harriet Edquist, *Architecture of Migration*. 1939-1975. p.24.



Figure 4-21. Glenunga Flats detailing. Cantilevered stair (centre), bevelled and rounded rafters (right), originally painted in strong contrasting colours. October 2006.

The Glenunga Flats illustrate Romberg and Shaw's continuing interest in concrete with their use of a reinforced cantilevered concrete stair and moulded cement stair skirting. The skillion roof is also supported with shaped and bevelled timber rafters originally painted in contrasting colours. Like Baldwinson, Romberg and Shaw enjoyed touches of contrasting colour on doors, rafters and window framing. The splashes of unexpected colour, the skillion roof form, shaped rafters, random rubble stonework and reinforced concrete were also affirmed as part of the Australian modernist vocabulary that Baldwinson employed.

Some years before, Baldwinson had been keen to live in Tecton's High Point Flats, London. When the 1939-45 War began and Baldwinson took on his role as architect for the Department of Aircraft Production (DAP), Fishermen's Bend, he and his wife Elspeth took up residence in Glenunga Flats. As late as 1952, Baldwinson was able to write to John Mockridge about a forthcoming *British House & Gardens* issue featuring Australian flats, "Regarding flats in Sydney, I am afraid that I do not know of anything anywhere near up to the standard of Grounds and Romberg- except a project by Seidler, but it has not yet been built."³⁷⁷

³⁷⁷ Arthur Baldwinson to John Mockridge, re: *British House & Gardens*, 10 January 1952. Personal Correspondence. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792.



Figure 4-22 Arthur Baldwinson. “Proposed Flats at Fairlands, Ashburner Street, Manly.” Project, 1938. Baldwinson papers, State Library of NSW, PXD 736, item no. 360.

While few Australian architects could have resisted the 1930s British or European enthusiasm for medium density flats, only one speculative Baldwinson project for flats is known in the pre-war period. Although it was designed for the seaside setting of Manly, NSW in 1938, it is a more urbanised solution to a deep parcel of land with a narrow street frontage.

Drawing from his British experience with Maxwell Fry’s Kensal Green and adapting Raymond McGrath’s promotions for glass brick from the 1937 *Glass in Architecture and Decoration* for the full elevation lighting of the building’s stairwells, Baldwinson’s design looks back to the rooftop sun-gardens of the 1930s, rather than forward to the 1940s. It was not commissioned.

On the other hand, Romberg and Shaw’s later wartime designs for residential projects for the Pettifer House (1943), East Ivanhoe and the Miller & Short House (1945), Upwey with their cantilevered concrete balconies with timbered pergolas, extensive glazing, site-sensitive plans for difficult sites and use of random rubble fieldstone would have been of even greater interest to Baldwinson on his wartime return to Melbourne for DAP defence work.

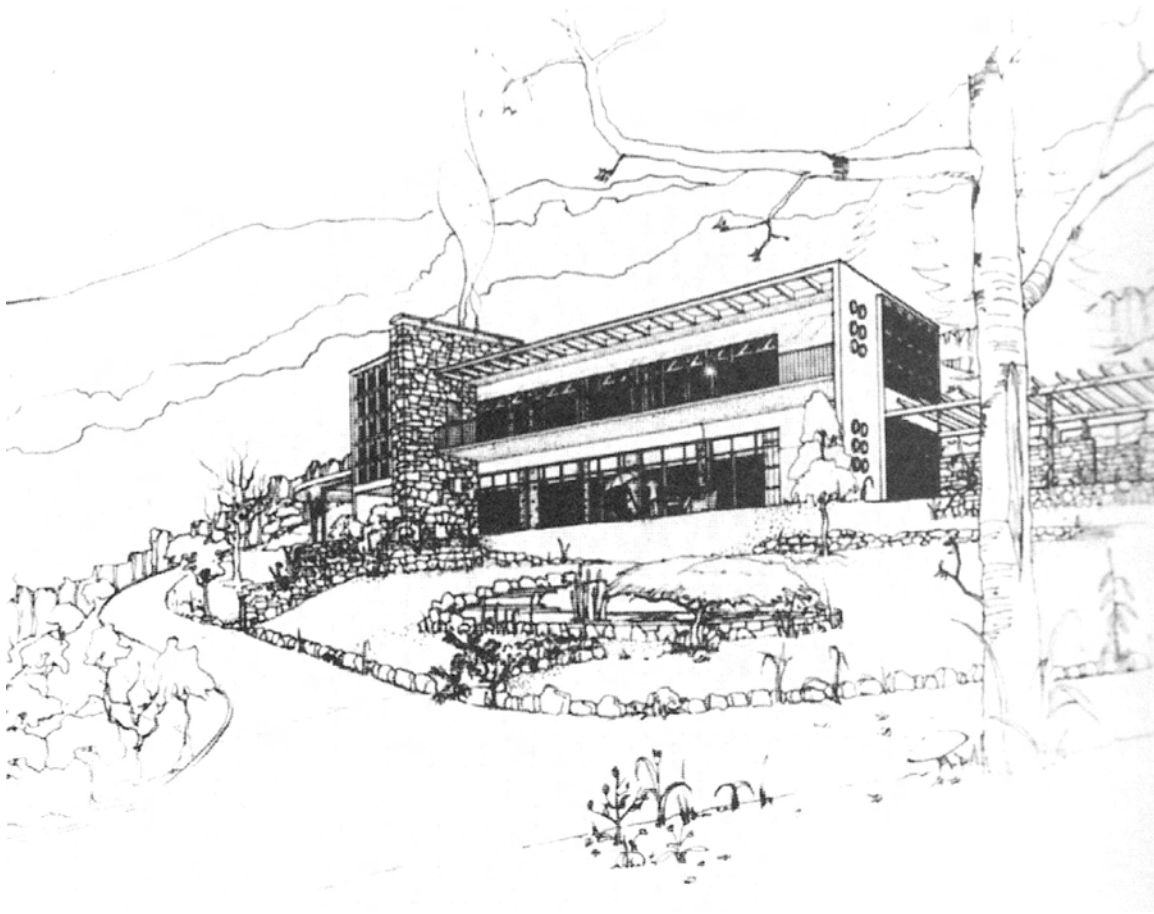


Figure 4-23. Frederick Romberg. Pettifer House Project, East Ivanhoe, 1943. Harriet Edquist, *Architecture of Migration*. 1939-1975. p.25.

On Baldwinson's return to Australia, the architect Roy Grounds, similar in age to Baldwinson, was amongst the most notable Melbourne modernist practitioners. Grounds also traveled overseas touring England and the United States (1929-1934) before he returned to Melbourne.³⁷⁸

The Baldwinson papers suggest that the two men were not acquainted during this period. Grounds established a Melbourne practice with Geoffrey Mewton in 1934, then severed the partnership in late 1936 and returned to England to work with Raymond McGrath's office just after Baldwinson returned to work with Stephenson & Turner in February 1937.³⁷⁹

The Mt Eliza residence, Ranelagh, built for the Grounds family was his most significant work during the early 1930s. The timber-framed structure clad externally and internally with fibrous cement panels was published in the June 1936 issue of *Australian Home Beautiful* as "Ship Aground at Ranelagh". As Goad notes, "Nautical analogies abounded at Ranelagh:

³⁷⁸ Conrad Hamann. "Grounds, Romberg and Boyd." *Architects of Australia*, Howard Tanner, editor. Macmillan, 1981. p.130.

³⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p.131.

portholes, a spiral steel stairway to a bridge-like sunroom on the second floor. [...] The proposed ship's railing was thick rope draped between vertical up-stands.'³⁸⁰ While the nautical embellishments would have found very little favour with Baldwinson, the composition of the floorplan, the elevations, fenestration and roof plan were valuable additions to the language of early modernism.



Figure 4-24. Roy Grounds. Ranelagh, 1936. Photo Doug Evans Collection, 1999.

When Grounds returned to Australia in 1939, Baldwinson had already established his private Sydney practice in October 1938. But the innovations that Grounds made in his 1940-41 Quamby Flats, Glover Court, Toorak, however, would not have gone un-noticed, especially during Baldwinson's wartime posting to Melbourne.

This is a particularly relevant design for Baldwinson as it, like the later residential projects and designs by Romberg, adjusts itself to the topography of a steeply graded location as well as the radius of a suburban Toorak cul-de-sac street. While vegetation and subsequent development has obscured the bagged brick, the fieldstone blade walls and reinforced concrete detailing, the accomplishment of Grounds' site-adjusted Quamby Flats can be appreciated through the photograph shown in the figure below.

³⁸⁰ Philip Goad, *The Modern House in Melbourne 1945-1975*. PhD Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1992, p.1/21. The house was also described and illustrated in Robin Boyd's 1947 *Victorian Modern*.

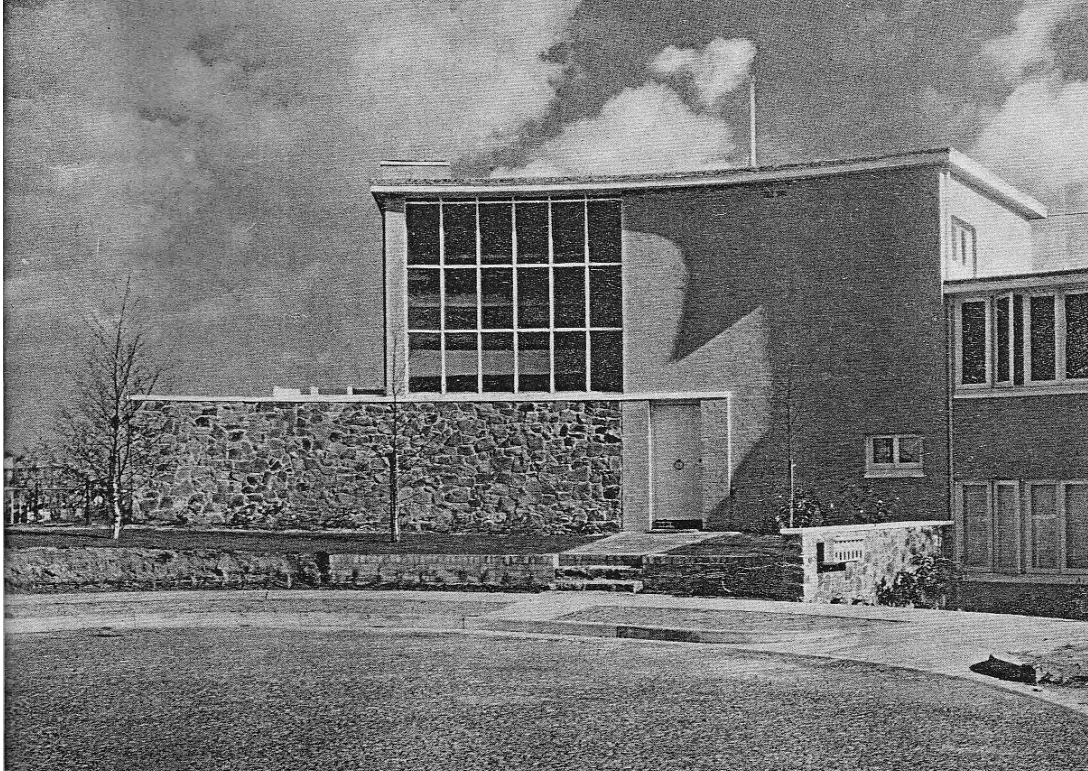


Figure 4-25. Roy Grounds. Quamby Flats, Glover Court, Toorak, 1940-41. Beiers, *Houses of Australia. A Survey of Domestic Architecture*. p.81.

The Glover Court-facing elevation captures the radius of the street, while a vista toward the nearby Yarra River is enhanced by the radiating elevation to this aspect. The stepped composition that follows the fall line of the slope adds additional residential space as well as providing enclosed garages for the newly mobile Melbournian. This was to be one of Grounds' last civilian works before he took up fulltime defense work with the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).

While Grounds' earlier design for the Clendon flats, Armadale (1939-41), a series of eight "Bed-Sit" *Existenzminimum* flats facing into a pergola-covered courtyard is celebrated as an uncompromising Melbourne modernist essay, its innovations were not of direct relevance to Baldwinson's residential practice. Similar to Baldwinson's London infatuation with Tecton's High Point I Flats, the young Robin Boyd took up residence in Clendon with his spouse, Patricia Madder in early 1940.³⁸¹

³⁸¹ Geoffrey Serle. *Robin Boyd. A Life*. Melbourne University Press, 1995, p.70-71. Robin Boyd in his first partnership with Kevin Pethebridge as Boyd and Petheridge ran their practice from Flat 1, Clendon, Clendon Rd, Armadale, Melbourne.



Figure 4-26. Roy Grounds. Quamby Flats, Glover Court, Toorak, 1940-41. Additional units are obscured behind trees to the left. A quarry remnant appears in the right foreground. In Tanner, *Architects of Australia*, p.131

In conclusion, Baldwinson would have found much to discover in Victorian architecture since his departure for Europe. While he would have found little to interest him in the Willem Dudok-inspired brickwork that underlay the highly proficient work of Norman Seabrook and the residential work of the early practice of Mewton and Grounds, he found an architectural horizon that was quietly expanding under the late 1930s influence of Overend, Janeba, Romberg and Roy Grounds,

The result was a Victorian variant of Australian modernism that was developing a response to the regional issues of site, materials and climate and demonstrated little or no interest in International Modernism. As Goad has noted, “Other attempts at the “International Style” were invariably designs of little structural or planning interest.”... “[T]he infiltration of pure International Style into Melbourne is very slight between 1933 and 1942. [...] [F]ew architects wrote about or understood the ideological *zeitgeist*.”³⁸²

³⁸² Goad, op. cit., p/ 1/28 – 1/29.

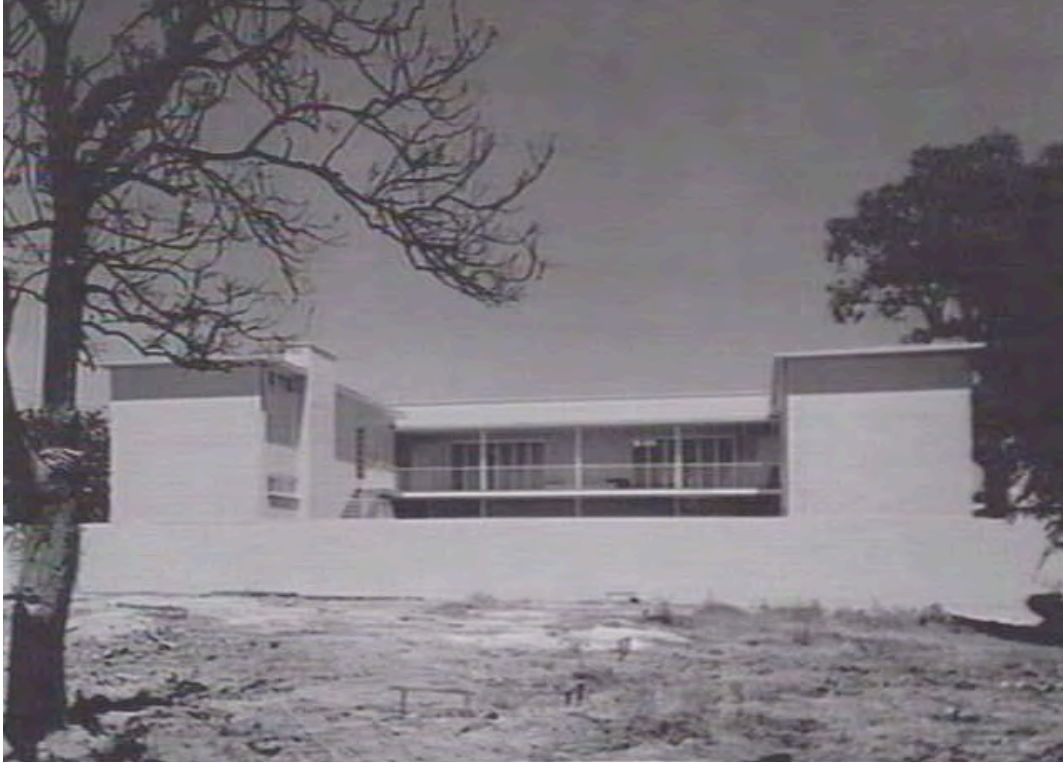


Figure 4-27. Roy Grounds. Clendon Flats, Armadale, 1939. View into the enclosed courtyard, the original Clendon Street frontage to the left of the structure. State Library of Victoria, No. a36969.



Figure 4-28. Roy Grounds. Details of Clendon Flats, Armadale, 1939. October 2006. Street-facing balcony (left), Shaped rafter detailing (right) similar to Romberg's Glenunga Flats.

THE SYDNEY SETTING IN THE 1930S

Sydney modernism was embryonic at the time of Baldwinson's appearance in New South Wales. As mentioned earlier, it is not clear why Baldwinson wanted to establish his private practice in Sydney, a city where he had few personal contacts. This was soon remedied through his pivotal role in transplanting the British MARS (Modern Architecture Research Society) in Sydney. The MARS members proved eager to contribute to the "ideological *zeitgeist*" of modernism and most of the earlier explorations of modernism in Sydney came from MARS members.

During the 1930s, there were a few marginally modernist practitioners in Sydney including Peddle & Thorp (later Peddle Thorp & Walker in 1924) and John Brogan. Some authorities (notably Raymond McGrath in *Twentieth Century Houses* of 1934) include Professor Leslie Wilkinson's Mediterranean-inspired adaptations of residential architecture (Wilkinson was head of the Faculty of Architecture, University of Sydney).³⁸³ Richard Apperly's notes:

*By the late 1930s modern architecture was accepted as a fact of life by most Sydney architects, although there were few convincing local examples of the new architecture to provide visual evidence of this acceptance. [...] [M]any architects discovered that after several decades of designing in a traditional manner they simply could not make the adjustment necessary to convert themselves into modernists. Gerard McDonell [early award-winning Sydney modernist] recalled that John D. Moore often said of modern architecture, "I like it, I would like to do it, but I can't."*³⁸⁴

Amongst Sydney's progressives, Peddle & Thorp rated highly. Peddle & Thorp had created what Apperly describes as a "strong domestic practice" from the 1920s. Modernism, however, is not in evidence. James Peddle had been a furniture maker in Britain and came to Australia in 1884. By the early 20th century, he was practising as an architect in Sydney where he and Thorp formed a partnership. Peddle later travelled to Los Angeles in 1911 and returned to Sydney in 1914 to continue the partnership. Peddle & Thorp specialised in large-scale domestic commissions using rusticated masonry or dark brick drawing from the north-eastern United States "shingle style", later moving to a "bungalow style" after Peddle's return from California.³⁸⁵ Edquist suggests that the Peddle & Thorp bungalow contains important architectural elements that feature in post-war Australian modernism that include a movement toward the Open Plan and site-sensitive composition.

The Jazz Style or "Moderne" was seen as one of the more progressive Sydney styles on Baldwinson's return to Australia. As in Melbourne, the Sydney Moderne style was

³⁸³ McGrath makes no claims for Wilkinson as a modernist but considers that he say that the "Mediterranean" (Italian/Spanish) house plan was best suited for the Australian climate. McGrath, *Twentieth Century Houses*, *ibid.*, p.106-107.

³⁸⁴ Richard Apperly, "Sydney Houses 1914-1939." Master of Architecture Thesis, UNSW, 1972. Vol. 1, p.242. Moore, however, was an early member of the MARS movement.

³⁸⁵ Apperly, *ibid.*, pps.89-90. See also Harriet Edquist. *Pioneers of Modernism. The Arts and Crafts Movement in Australia*. Melbourne University Press, 2008. pps.111-113.

characterised by forms inspired by the now-familiar streamlining vocabulary with rounded corners and porthole windows, embellished with shallow-relief geometric ornament.

The perspective drawn by Winsome Hall (1905-1997), an early graduate from the University of Sydney's architecture programme reproduced from R.M. Edmunds' architectural survey is typical of the Sydney Moderne style. Hall's subsequent career continued her early modernist trend when in association with Eric Andrew; they were Sulman Award winners for their Manly Surf Pavilion in 1939.³⁸⁶

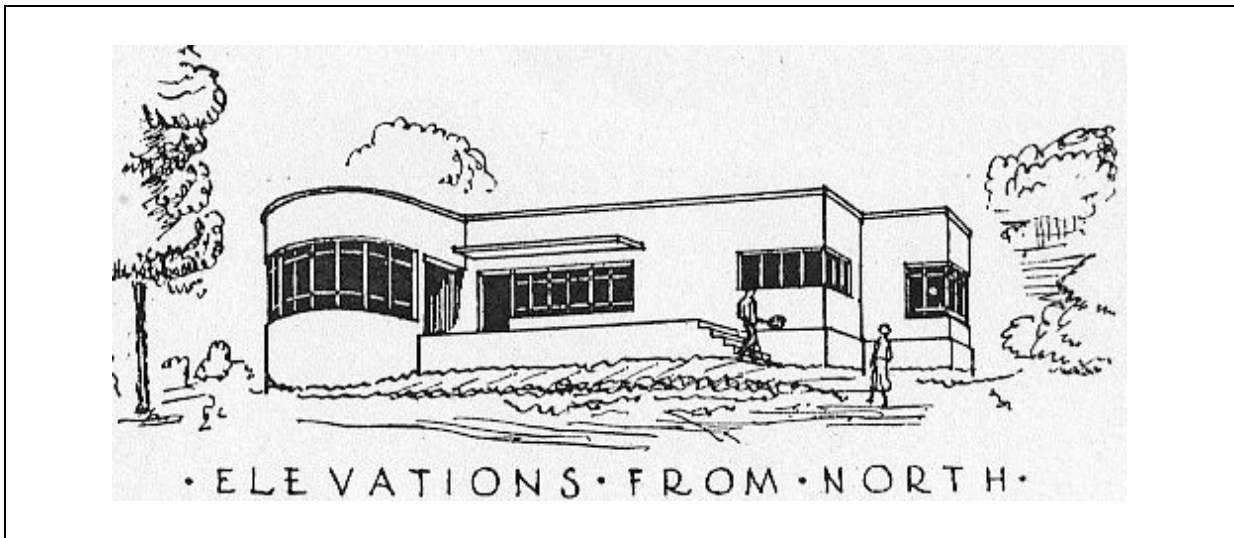


Figure 4-29. Winsome Hall. Moderne project perspective, ca.1938. Drawing from R.M. Edmunds. *Architecture. An Introductory Study*, Dymocks, Sydney 1939, p.262.

The Manly Surf Pavilion designed for a competition in 1936 has several other associations with nascent Sydney modernism as Sydney Ancher has been identified as a member of the team responsible for the Pavilion through a signed perspective of the building that appears on a 1937 cover of *Decoration and Glass*.³⁸⁷ Sydney's Modern Architecture Research Society (MARS) members Morton Herman and Henry Pynor were also on the NSW RAIA jury that selected the building for the award. The Sulman Award is the NSW RAIA's annual award for "excellence in architectural design" originally endowed by Sir John Sulman (1849-1934) and awarded for the first time in 1932 to Peddle Thorp and Walker's Science House, Sydney.³⁸⁸

C. Bruce Dellit is also considered one of the more progressive Moderne commercial architecture practitioners in Sydney, initially on the basis of his ANZAC War Memorial, Hyde Park, Sydney. His later work includes theatres, banks and hotels. Like Raymond McGrath, he had studied with Leslie Wilkinson at the University of Sydney. When he won

³⁸⁶ Bronwyn Hanna. *Absence and Presence. A Historiography of Early Women Architects in NSW*. PhD Thesis. Faculty of the Built Environment, UNSW, 1999.

³⁸⁷ Andrew Metcalf. *Architecture in Transition*, op. cit., p.70.

³⁸⁸ There were six building categories at this time: public, ecclesiastical, educational, commercial, domestic and institutional. Juries were prescribed as four architects, one painter, one art critic and the Director of the Art Gallery of NSW.

the ANZAC Memorial competition in 1929, the sculptor, Rayner Hoff employed Raymond McGrath's sister, the sculptor Eileen McGrath. Dellit's residential work is typically described as "Mediterranean" in the manner of his teacher Leslie Wilkinson.



Figure 4-30. Eric Andrew in association with Winsome Hall. Manly Surf Pavilion, 1938 (demolished). NSW State Records Office, No. 12932_a012_a012.

It would be irresponsible to survey this era without reference to the Canberra designers Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin, but their speculative subdivision for the Greater Sydney Development Association (through Melbourne financiers) for the Castle Cove and Castlecrag area seems to have had very little impact on Sydney's residential architecture practice. Struggling through the financial crisis of 1929, only 19 houses had been built to the Griffins' designs by 1932.

The surprisingly ornamental Griffin houses are eccentric by Moderne standards and while their concrete construction included some modernist elements such as flat roofs, built-in storage, "scientific" kitchens and sensitive site planning, their architectural legacy in Sydney is meagre.³⁸⁹ The ponderous masonry construction is at odds with the earliest modernist expressions in Sydney. The Castlecrag houses were well-placed in the rugged landscape and influenced subsequent generations of architects who built in this architecturally significant suburb. Perhaps the Griffin's association with theosophy and spiritualism also undermined some of their credibility but in Sydney, they were not alone in their interest in alternative religious pursuits.

³⁸⁹ Reviewed in detail in Anne Watson, editor. *Beyond architecture: Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin in America, Australia and India*. Powerhouse Publishing, 1998.



Figure 4-31. Bruce Dellit. ANZAC Memorial, Hyde Park, Sydney, 1929. State Records Office, NSW. No. 32-a012. Date Unknown.



Figure 4-32. Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin. No. 8, The Parapet, Castlecrag, 1925. This was the Griffin residence from 1925-1935. www.castlecrag.org.au.

While the Swedenborgist John Brogan's most celebrated 1936 work, Wydefel Gardens, Potts Point is associated with the narrative of the earliest notions of modernist architectural design

in New South Wales, his pattern book *101 Australian Homes* of 1936 published by the Building Publishing Company provides a more accurate sampler of his consistently eclectic approach to residential design.³⁹⁰ The book contains plans and elevations of 101 residential designs; but not one modernist style is on offer.



Figure 4-33. John Brogan. Wydefel Gardens from Elizabeth Bay, ca.1940. City of Sydney Archives, no.040631.

Apperly's analysis of Brogan's *101 Australian Homes* places most of the designs in the genres of "Mediterranean", "Spanish Mission" and an early proto-"California Bungalow" style.³⁹¹ Brogan's foray into modernism was transitory and supported (and perhaps encourages) by his patron W.A. Crowle. When compared to later works of the 1930s, Brogan's Wydefel Gardens appear distinctly Moderne in style and conception.

Apperly's assessment of Brogan suggests that his practice featured a stylish eclecticism characteristic of the 1930s. Brogan certainly had diverse interests and had long associations with the Swedenborg Association (at one point, he was elected President of the Association) and the Sydney Bahai community. He later designed a domed Bahia Temple on Sydney's northern beaches in 1957.

³⁹⁰ This commission is associated with the progressive philanthropist W.A. Crowle who was allegedly inspired by a Bavarian housing complex near Oberammergau. "Elizabeth Bay and Potts Point Walk." The 20th Century Society. Undated.

³⁹¹ Apperly, op. cit., vol.1, p.120-121.

A NEW GENERATION OF SYDNEY MODERNISTS

The first generation of committed modernists in Sydney with practices similar to Baldwinson, Grounds and Romberg had direct experience in British and European modernism in the 1930s and returned to Australia with its images and ideals foremost in their minds. In Sydney, this included Gerard (G.H.B.) McDonell, Sydney Ancher, Morton Herman and Walter Bunning.

Gerard McDonell studied architecture at the University of Sydney with Leslie Wilkinson, and John D. Moore, graduated in 1932, and left for overseas and returning to establish a practice in mid-1930s.³⁹² When Baldwinson, Bunning and others organised the MARS group in Sydney, McDonell was amongst its first members. He is best recalled for his 1940 Sulman Award for his residence at 67 Elgin Street, Gordon.³⁹³ It received considerable press at the time with features in *The Home*, *Australian Home Beautiful* and *Decoration and Glass* that celebrated its spare elevations, siting and open plan living areas.

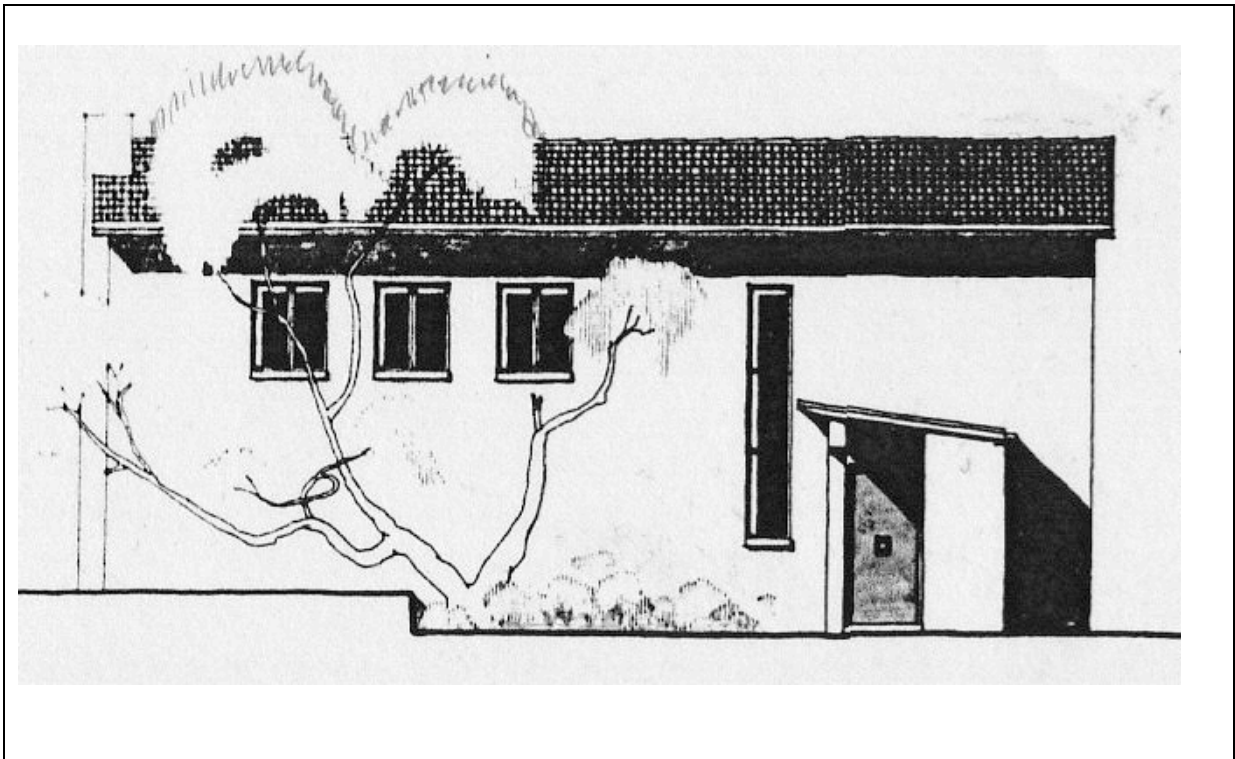


Figure 4-34. Gerard McDonell. McDonell House, Gordon, 1939. The skillion-roofed structure is the street entrance. Southwest elevation. Drawing from Apperly, p.185-187.

³⁹² Andrew Metcalf. "The McDonell House." *Architecture in Transition. The Sulman Award 1932-1996*. Historic Houses Trust of NSW, 1997, p.72.

³⁹³ The jury included Morton Herman, S.G. Thorp, J.D. Moore, Henry Pynor, McDonell (retired for deliberation), Fred Medworth, Will Ashton and R. Haughton James. Metcalf, *ibid.*, p.72.

The house, built for his family, receives high praise from Apperly who welcomes it (and Baldwinson's 1938 Collins House) as amongst Sydney's earliest manifestations of modernism.³⁹⁴

... [I]f one is looking for a building which is the product of a calm and thorough application of rational thought processes to the problem at hand and which contains no stylistic irrelevancies whatsoever, then this building was of the greatest significance in the evolution of the Sydney house... "[...] "McDonell recalls that he had been influenced by the simplicity of modern buildings he had seen in Europe, especially in Germany and Britain." [...] ...[A]ny indigenous design quality it achieved was a happy by-product of a sensible design process rather than a self-consciously desired end.



Figure 4-35. Gerard McDonell. McDonell House, Gordon, 1939. French doors open onto a masonry-supported ground level terrace and the site falls away sharply into bushland. Photo Alec Murray. In Beiers, *Houses of Australia*, p.57.

³⁹⁴ Apperly, op. cit., p.186-187.

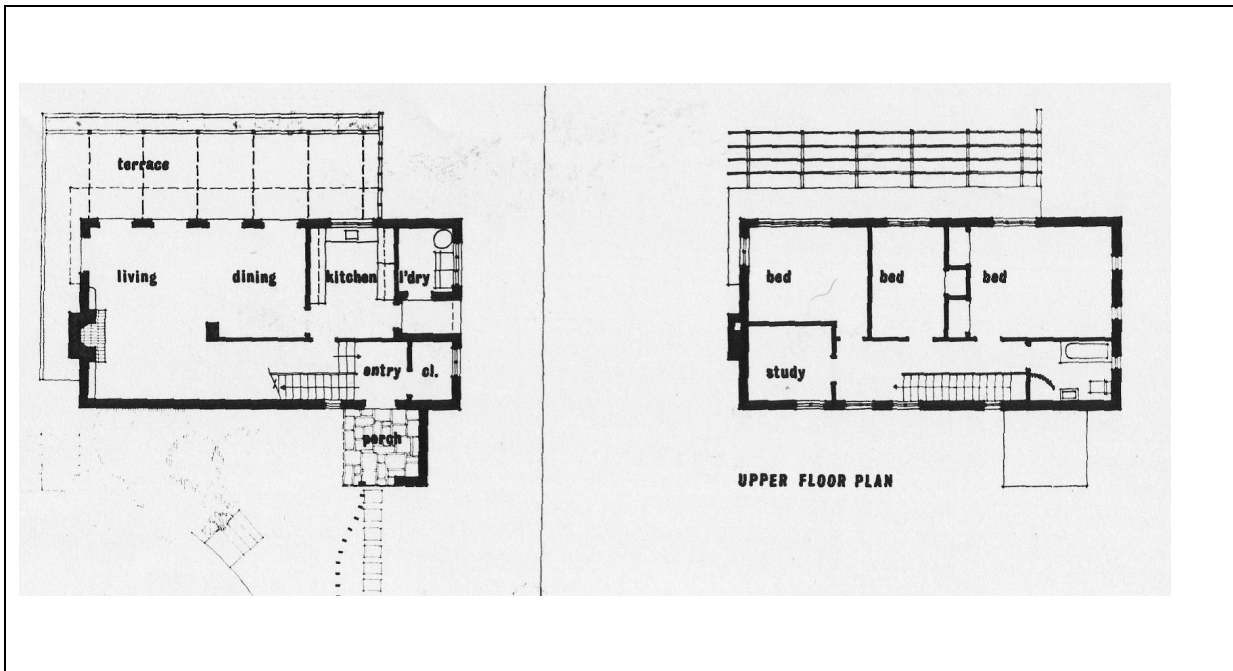


Figure 4-36. Gerard McDonell. McDonell House, Gordon, 1939. Ground floor (left) and upper floor plan. Plan drawing from Apperly, p.185-187.

The McDonell House was greeted with great enthusiasm and received considerable attention in the media and its vaguely Loos-like elevation remained a classical modernist precursor in the development of Sydney's architecture.³⁹⁵ It was later reproduced in Beiers' 1948 *Houses of Australia*. Inexplicably, McDonell's interest in modernism seems to have waned and his later work becomes obscure.

Walter Bunning was an exemplary Sydney modernist. He elected the first president of the Sydney MARS group in 1939 when he returned from a scholarship-sponsored tour of Britain and Europe from 1937-39.³⁹⁶ Bunning was born in Brisbane and studied at Sydney Technical College while working for Stephenson & Meldrum's Sydney office. He completed his studies in 1936, then won a NSW Board of Architects scholarship and went to London to study town planning.³⁹⁷

Bunning makes his greatest contribution to the Sydney modernist movement as a writer rather than as a designer. He had close associations with Sydney Ure Smith's stable of magazines, *The Home* and *Art in Australia* and provided them with copy (anonymous as well as signed) in the late 1930s and early 1940s. This gave him considerable influence and he was amongst the first to recognise the work of Arthur Baldwinson, fellow-founder of the MARS organisation.

³⁹⁵ Early visitors described the simplicity of the interiors as "Scandinavian". Apperly, op. cit.

³⁹⁶ MARS only lasted long enough for two presidents (discussed in the following chapter)

³⁹⁷ Peter Spearritt, 'Bunning, Walter Ralston (1912 - 1977)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Online Edition, 19 January 2007.

Bunning wrote, for example, about Arthur Baldwinson's first residential commission, the Collins House, in a feature article "Design for Leisure" for the November 1941 edition of *The Home*.³⁹⁸ Bunning's review concluded, "Taking this house as a whole, its level of aesthetic achievement will undoubtedly be branded by the future historian as a landmark in the development of contemporary architecture in Australia."³⁹⁹

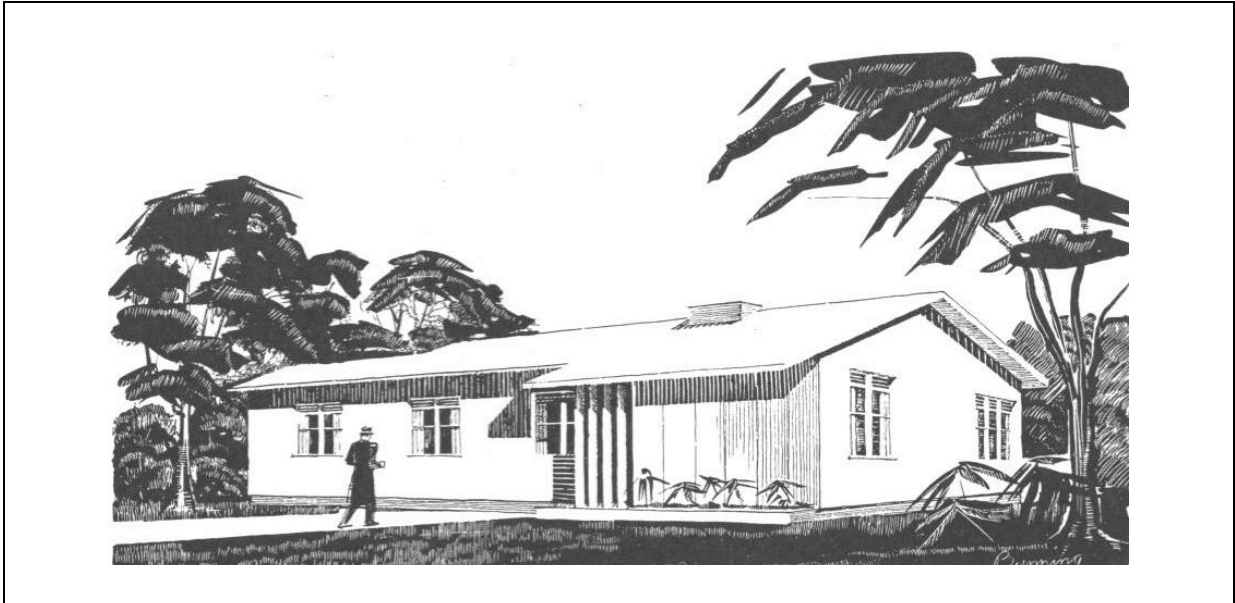


Figure 4-37. Walter Bunning, MARS House designed as entry-level housing for working families, 1940. *Australian Timber Journal*. February/March 1940, p.25.

As MARS president, he had a significant presence amongst Sydney architects. John Fisher, who worked for the architectural practice of Ruskin & Rowe (one of Bunning's first employers on his return to Australia), describes Bunning as "[A] tall, slightly pleased with himself sort of fellow. [...] I was impressed with him because I was only a kid. The first morning I went there [to Ruskin & Rowe] I had nothing to do and he said, 'Here, read this.' and gave me a copy of *Architecture*. I opened the first page and there was, 'My Travels in Europe' by Walter R. Bunning. AASTC, ARIBA, ARAIA, et cetera. I went down on my knees after that."⁴⁰⁰

In the immediate period before the outbreak of the 1939-45 War, Bunning built little but was an articulate supporter of European modernism through his journalism and his presidency of MARS. Following his studies in planning in London, he became best known as a planner although his firm Bunning and Madden received some significant commissions. His best-known work remains the wartime publication *Homes in the Sun. Past, Present, and Future of Australian Housing*, published by W.J. Nesbitt in 1945.

³⁹⁸ Walter Bunning, "Design for Living." *The Home*, November 1941, pps.37-39. The title is a pun on Noel Coward's 1933 play "Design for Living".

³⁹⁹ Bunning, op. cit. p.39.

⁴⁰⁰ "John Fisher Interview." NSW RAIA Files, v.3. no date, p.31.

Homes in the Sun features the modernist vision of a post-war Australia where medium density flats sit amongst parkland, their outlooks controlled by careful consideration of site, landscape architecture and solar considerations. The book takes care to illustrate Romberg and Shaw's 1941 Newburn flats as examples of progressive design⁴⁰¹. Bunning also used the British Impington College commission designed by Gropius and Fry while Baldwinson was in the firm as an example of the ideal community centre.⁴⁰² Baldwinson probably supplied the numerous illustrations as they are amongst his papers in the State Library of NSW.

Bunning's residential projects feature what he calls the "suntrap" house that assumes a flat-roofed L-shape composition enclosing a significant out-of-doors area. His "solar" houses, on the other hand, feature austere uncompromising modernist forms with visual analogies to Mies' 1929 Barcelona Pavilion. Like those of the Melbourne architect Best Overend, the Bunning designs proved easier to draw than to build.

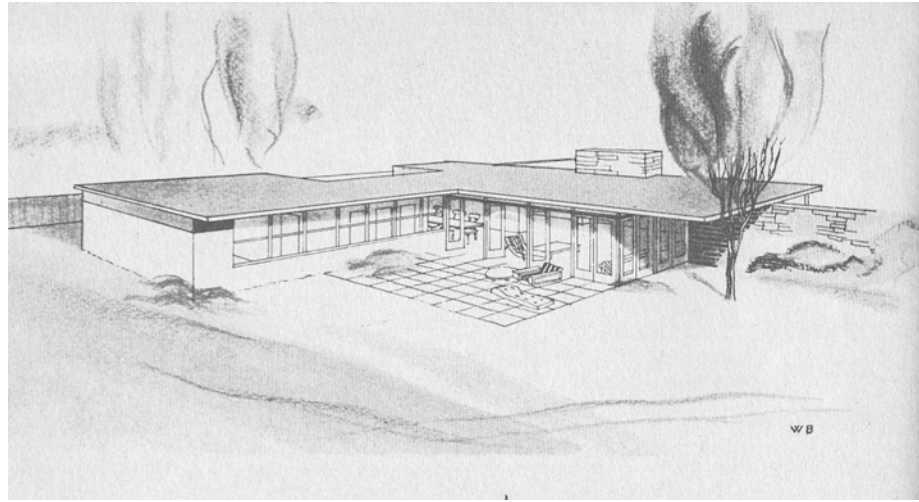


Figure 4-38. Walter Bunning. The Suntrap House 2, 1945. *Homes in the Sun*, 1945, p.50.

Bunnings' best-known residential commission was built in 1952 at Quakers Hat Bay in the northern Sydney suburbs. This asymmetrical house, sited on a demanding slope, rests on a podium of fieldstone with concrete decking supported by bracket-like trusses. The cladding uses timber scantlings to close the joints of vertical weatherboard, rendered masonry with zones of irregular ashlar.

While the 1952 house looks back to a modernism of the late 1930s, it integrates the best of Bunnings' L-plan and solar house principles. The cross-section shown below suggests some of the difficulties of residential design in the more challenging topography of the Sydney region.

⁴⁰¹ Walter Bunning. *Homes in the Sun*. W.J. Nesbitt, 1945, p.76.

⁴⁰² *ibid.*, p.82-84.

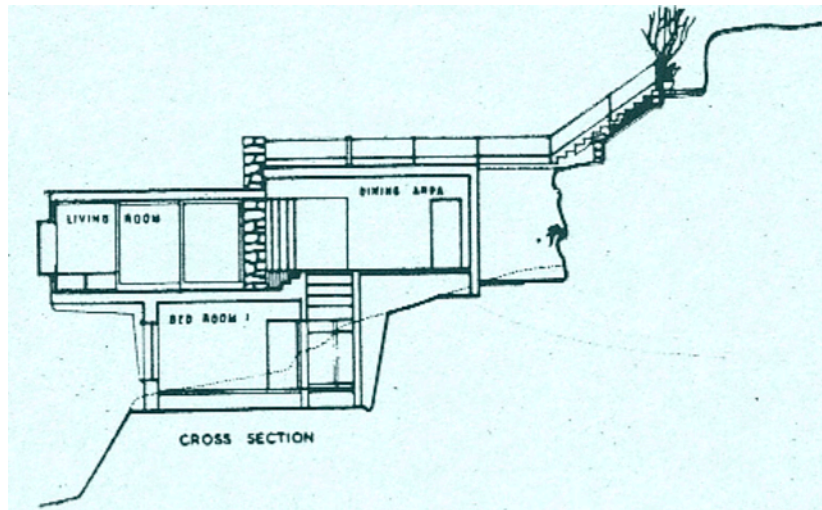


Figure 4-39. Walter Bunning, Bunning and Madden. Section, Quakers Hat Bay House, Ryrie Street, Mosman, Sydney. 1952. *Architecture*, April-June, 1954, p.64.

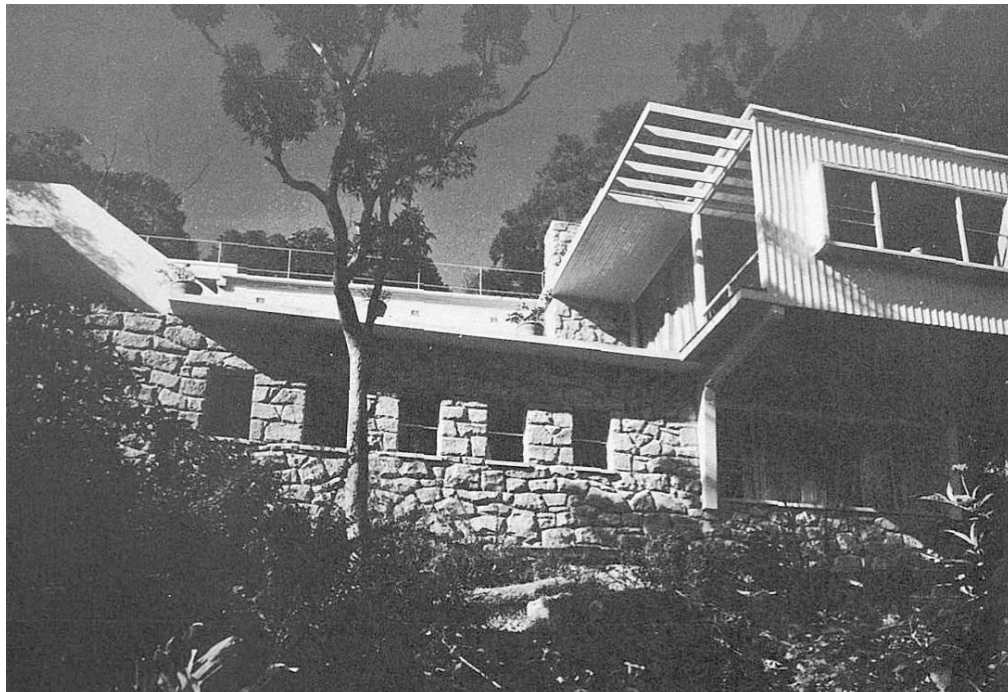


Figure 4-40. Walter Bunning, Bunning and Madden. Quakers Hat Bay House, Ryrie Street, Mosman, Sydney. 1952. *Architecture*, April-June, 1954, p.64.

Sydney Ancher's profile as the emergent Sydney modernist has been well established for several decades. While all of the previously identified architects played significant roles in the development of Sydney's modernist domestic architecture, Sydney Ancher is predominantly identified as one of the most influential modernists of the mid-20th century. His RAIA Gold Medal citation describes him as:

*One of the Australian pioneers of the Modern Movement [...] His work forged a vital link between Australian tradition and 20th century architecture [...] The work between 1945 to 1956 is the most influential of any architecture in Sydney. His houses are classics of the period.*⁴⁰³



Figure 4-41. Sydney Archer interview. "No Good British Architects." *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 January 1936, p.14.

Ancher's career began at Sydney Technical College where he qualified as an architect in 1929. He was awarded the Board of Architects travelling scholarship in 1930 and like most of his generation, he left immediately for England. He initially worked for the British modernist Joseph Emberton whose Royal Corinthian Yacht Club (1930) was one of the celebrated buildings of the 1930s. He travelled widely and saw the *Weissenhofsiedlung* in Stuttgart and the work of Gropius, Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier. After five years in

⁴⁰³ Stuart Murray. Sydney Ancher Obituary. *Architecture Australia*, February/March 1980, p.68.

Britain and Europe he returned home and took a position with Emil Sodersteen, another Sydney Technical College graduate, later moving to the practice of R.A. Prevost.⁴⁰⁴

With a youthful exuberance that he later regretted, Ancher returned to Australia full of enthusiasm for German architecture. An interview, obtained by an enterprising *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist who interviewed Ancher on-board his ship as it sailed into Sydney harbour, is characteristic of the young Sydney Ancher.

“Modern architecture should be expressive of the times,” Ancher told the reporter, “and to do this, should employ the three modern mediums glass, concrete and steel. [...] Sweden, Scandinavia and even Switzerland, have many fine examples of modern architecture although they have still to attain the high standard set by Germany prior to 1930. [...] There are no really good British architects, and the American architects [...] have for some years practised the ‘Art Decoratif’ style...”.⁴⁰⁵

In 1936, Ancher formed a partnership with an older architect R.A. Prevost for whom he built the well-known Prevost House, Kambala Road, Bellevue Hill. Prevost was an unusual client for the house as he was the author of a 1914 pattern guide *Australian Bungalow and Cottage Home Designs* that was the antithesis of Ancher’s style and philosophy.⁴⁰⁶

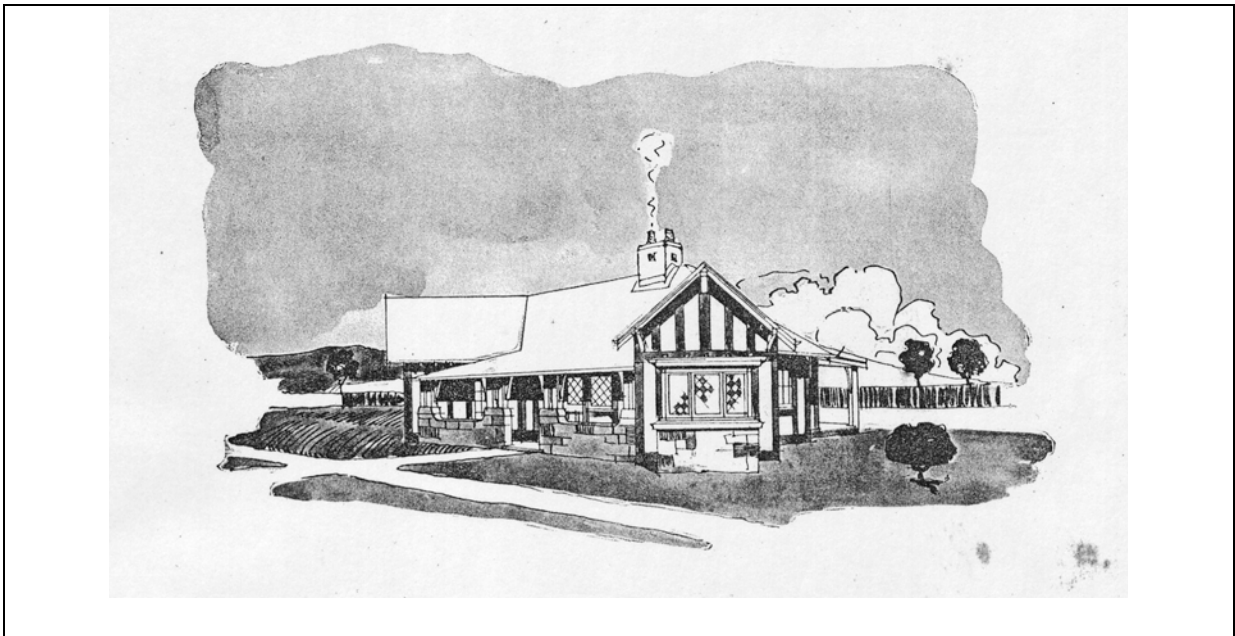


Figure 4-42. R.A. Prevost. “An unusual type of mountain bungalow.” Perspective. *Australian Bungalow and Cottage Home Designs*, 1914, plan no 45.

⁴⁰⁴ Richard E. Apperly and Peter Reynolds, “Ancher, Sydney Edward Cambrian (1904 - 1979).” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Online Edition, 2006.

⁴⁰⁵ Sydney Archer interview. “No Good British Architects.” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 January 1936, p.14.

⁴⁰⁶ Reginald A. Prevost. *Australian Bungalow and Cottage Home Designs*. NSW Bookstall Company, 1914.

Ancher's Prevost House, finished in 1937, is currently considered one of Sydney's earliest European modernist houses with particular attention paid to the open plan zoning of the interior with a curved dining enclosure drawing directly on the interior architecture of Pierre Chareau and the Tugendhat House interior (1930) of Mies van der Rohe. The Prevost House exterior was cement-rendered masonry painted white with a glass brick wall (with its suggestions of Chareau's Parisian *Maison de Verre* of 1928-32) supporting and surrounding the front door.⁴⁰⁷ Exceptionally large steel-framed windows addressed the street and a motor garage was integrated into the building form.

Mature plantings have much enhanced the Prevost House of 1937 and shown without vegetation, the exterior is clearly in the genre of the earliest British Moderne of the 1930s. Curiously, after another year in Prevost's practice designing a number of hotels in this style, Ancher returned to Britain in January 1939 where he heard lectures by Frank Lloyd Wright and travelled to Denmark, Sweden and Finland.⁴⁰⁸ He returned to Australia later that same year.



Figure 4-43. Sydney Ancher. Prevost House, 1937. *Art in Australia*, November 1937.

⁴⁰⁷ The use of glass brick also suggests the illustrations found in Raymond McGrath's 1937 landmark publication, *Glass in Architecture and Decoration*.

⁴⁰⁸ Richard E. Apperly, Peter Reynolds, "Ancher, Sydney Edward Cambrian (1904 - 1979)." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Online Edition, 2006

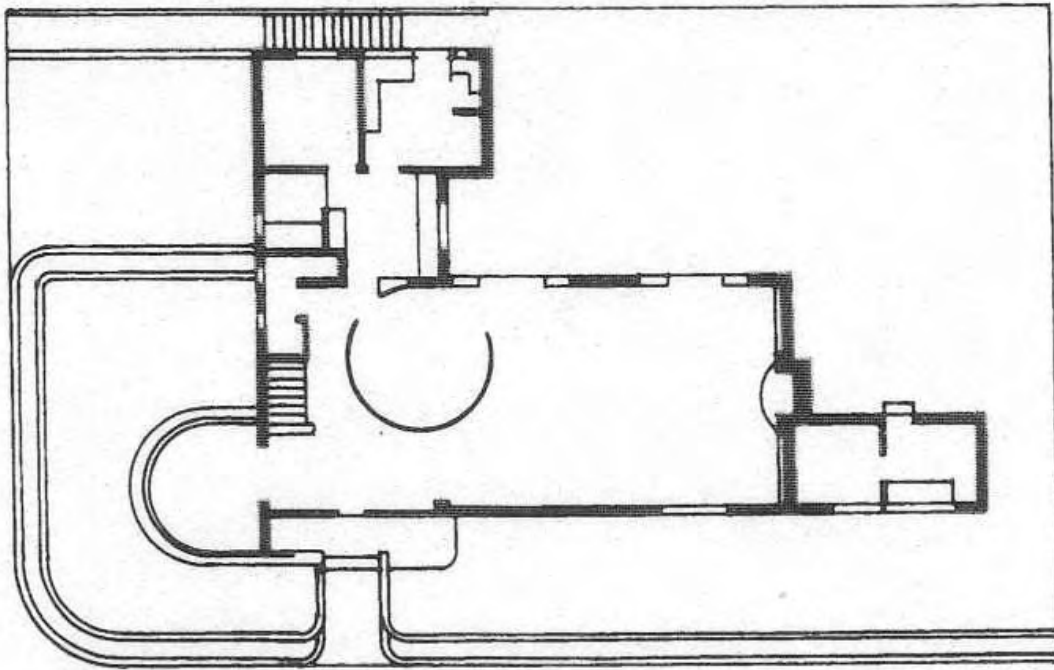


Figure 4-44. Sydney Ancher. Prevost House, 1937. Level one floor plan, Graham Jahn, *Guide to Sydney Architecture*, 1999.

Ancher's career, like so many others, was interrupted by the 1939-45 War and he considered that it began after he returned from war service. As his 1936 shipboard interview suggests, he was captivated by the work of Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier but it wasn't until after 1945 that he could employ it. "[The modernist philosophy of Mies] "...really got to me [in the 1930s] and when I came back here in 1936 [they] were still nagging me; but it wasn't until after the war that I had a chance to use it all, when I built my first house at Killara [in 1945]."⁴⁰⁹ This house, *Poyntzfield*, was awarded a NSW RAIA Sulman Award in 1945.

Ancher and Baldwinson were acquainted in Britain as Ancher's name appears in Baldwinson's earliest address diary during his residence there in the 1930s.⁴¹⁰ Although Ancher's early views on modernism were trenchant, his name does not appear in the progressive Sydney MARS group papers or members lists discovered to date.⁴¹¹ It appears he was not a member.

As two singular modernists, the architects would be well acquainted with each other's post-war work in Sydney. Ancher and Baldwinson, developing residential designs for the developing post-war suburbs in North Sydney, encountered persistent problems with their

⁴⁰⁹ This was *Poyntzfield*, 3 Maytone Avenue, Killara. David Saunders and Catherine Burke. *Ancher Mortlock Murray and Woolley. Sydney Architects 1946-1976*. Power Institute of Fine Arts, 1976. pps.11-12.

⁴¹⁰ Baldwinson papers. MLMSS 7792, address diary, 1935.

⁴¹¹ Andrew Metcalf's summary of Ancher's career in *Architecture in Transition. The Sulman Award 1932-1996* states that he was involved in the formation of MARS after 1936, p.76. The Sydney MARS was convened in March 1938.

flat roofs and modernist designs with the North Shore Local Government Authorities. Ancher's 1945 Sulman Award residence *Poyntzfield*, for example, was finally built with a low gable roof following the rejection of a flat roof plan by the local council.

BALDWINSON, MODERNISM AND THE 1938 TIMBER DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA COMPETITION

Baldwinson's design role with Stephenson & Turner required frequent commuting from Sydney to Melbourne. But in spite of the pressures of travel and the responsibilities of the practice, he was also working on the design and planning of three modernist timber residences to enter in the 1938 Timber Development Association (TDA) of Victoria competition. That this was done with Stephenson & Turner's blessing is apparent from a fulsome 1938 letter of congratulations from Arthur Stephenson after "Baldy" (as Stephenson nicknamed Baldwinson) won the competition.⁴¹²

Drawing on British models for timber promotion, the Timber Development Association (TDA) was active in marketing Australian timber construction in Victoria and New South Wales. The Victorian organization was founded in 1936 (NSW in 1937) for the purposes of promoting timber use.⁴¹³ They also published the *Australian Timber Journal* featuring their promotions as well as supplying technical information regarding Australian timbers.

Their 1938 RVIA-approved "Timber House Designs Architectural Commission" was announced in *Atelier* and other journals in October 1937 with a rather brisk closing date of 30 November 1937. There were residential categories of Type A: £500, Type B: £850 and Type C: £2000 houses. The assessors were Alec S. Eggleston, John D. D. Scarborough and Keith Mackay.

When the winners were announced, Baldwinson had won an unprecedented sweep of all three categories. The judges, perhaps too timid to fully embrace Baldwinson's flat roofing programmes, made co-equal assessments in all categories. This means that while Baldwinson won all categories, he shared the £500 house prize of £100 with E. A. Hunt, the £850 prize of £100 with Wilbur Murphy and the £2000 house prize of £100 with Marcus Martin. Best Overend was awarded a consolation prize in two categories. A gracious letter of congratulations from Overend survives in the Baldwinson papers.⁴¹⁴

While these three designs are very early achievements in his career, Baldwinson also demonstrated his willingness to adapt his newly acquired modernist methodology to Australian practice. This is apparent in the generous outdoor spaces incorporated in each design as well as the provision of a traditional "sleep out"; a feature of Australian domestic

⁴¹² Arthur Stephenson to Arthur Baldwinson, 24 July 1938. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1992, Box Y4408.

⁴¹³ Timber Development Association (TDA). *Modern Homes in Timber*. TDA, New South Wales, 1939, p.41.

⁴¹⁴ Best Overend to Arthur Baldwinson, 24 July 1938, Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1992, Box Y4408.

architecture since the Arts and Crafts era. A “sleep out” is even provided for his nine-room, two level £2000 house.⁴¹⁵

Baldwinson’s three TDA prizewinner houses illustrate his international experience through variations in open planning in the living areas as well as the design of ground-hugging, wide-eaved horizontal elevations with large expanses of glass typically in strip windows. His £500 house employs a simple skillion roof and the interior is lighted with strips of timber casement windows to each elevation. The modest box-like structure of this inexpensive house is animated with a sweeping extension of the skillion roof to create a porch supported by a shaped timber treillage. The judges must have been attracted by the uncompromising simplicity of the design.

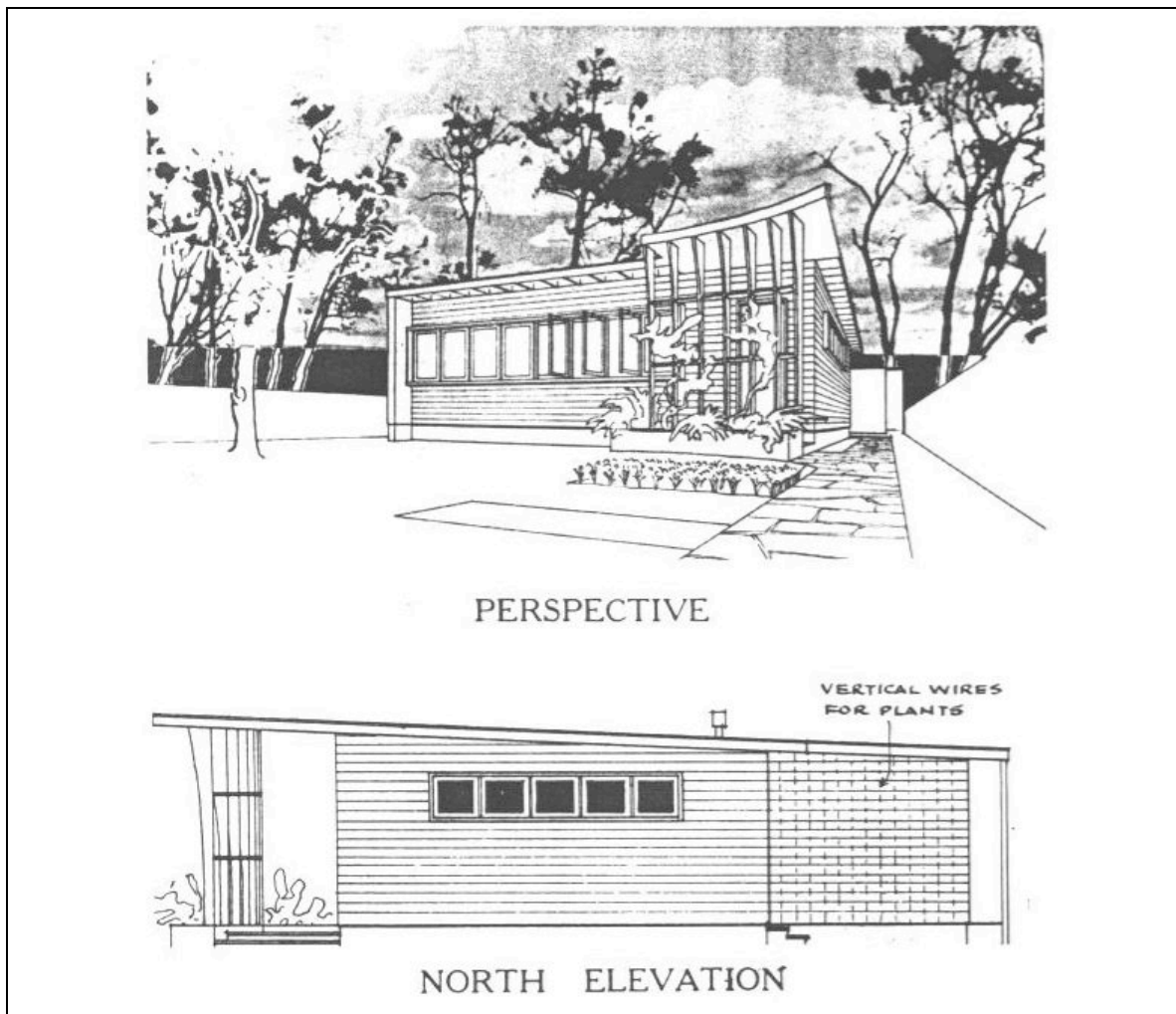


Figure 4-45. Arthur Baldwinson. £500 House, 1938. Timber Development Association. Baldwinson papers, PXE 778, Volume 4.

⁴¹⁵ Regional versions of the “sleep-out” are particularly common in the American South (known as a “screen porch” or “screened porch”) and other North American regions (especially the Pacific Coast and the Adirondack Mountain area) as a “Sleeping Porch”.

The £850 house also offered a nod in the direction of the open plan and employed a tracked curtain or flexible partition to separate the dining and living areas. The pinwheel-shaped two-bedroom house also featured a screened sleep-out leading directly into the living area via a sliding glass door. The sleep-out in this instance is a tentative step toward the modular courtyard enclosure that is to become part of Baldwinson's design vocabulary. Generous fieldstone paved patios with sliding doors that provide external access to living and bedroom areas are also a feature of his later work.

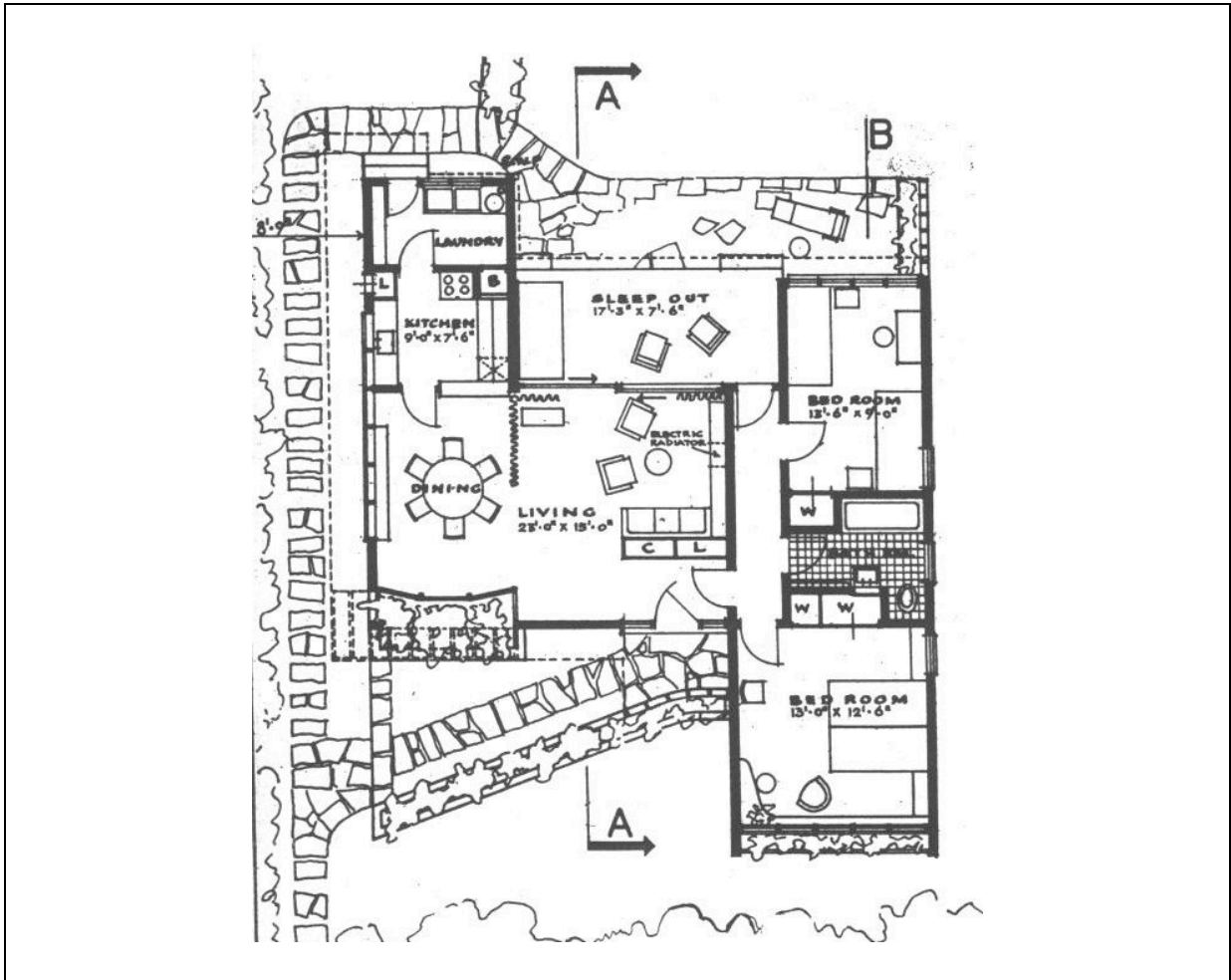


Figure 4-46. Arthur Baldwinson. £850 House, 1938. Timber Development Association. Baldwinson papers, PXE 778, Volume 4.

Baldwinson's expansive £2000 house contains a number of visual references to his residential design experience with Gropius and Fry; in particular, the 1936 weatherboard house at Sevenoaks where rectilinear projections such as balconies and entrance porches extend from a surprising number of roof angles and elevations. Baldwinson uses similar devices in his £2000 house but animates these projections with compound curves and an obliquely angled first storey stair.

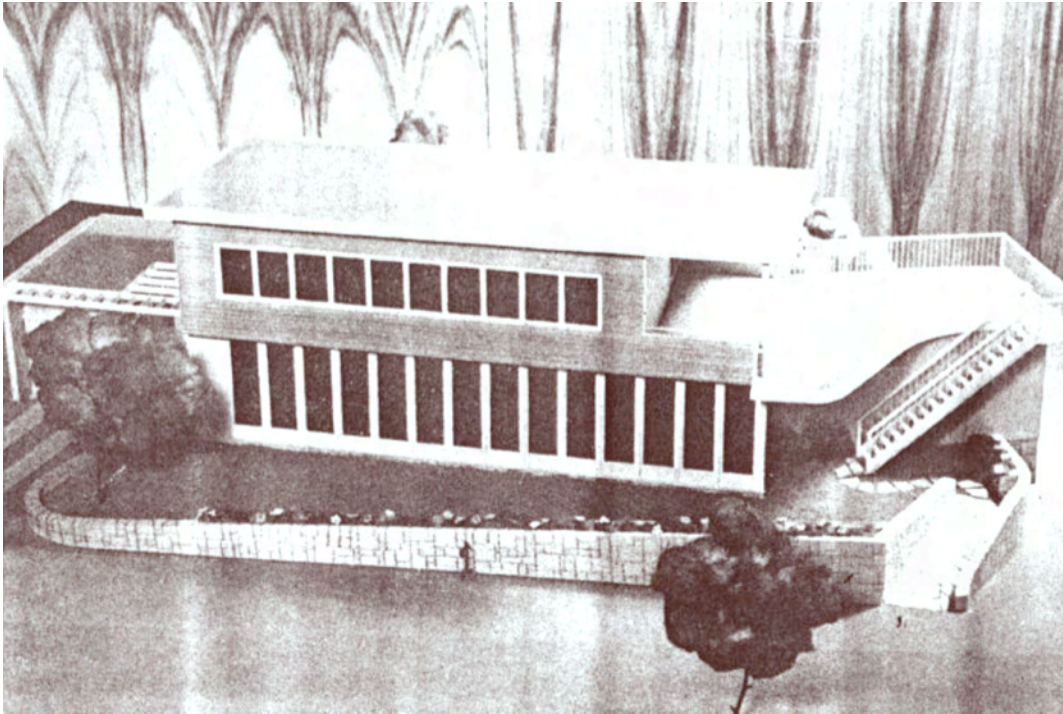


Figure 4-47. Arthur Baldwinson. Model of £2000 House, 1938. Timber Development Association. *Art in Australia*, August 1939, p. 82.

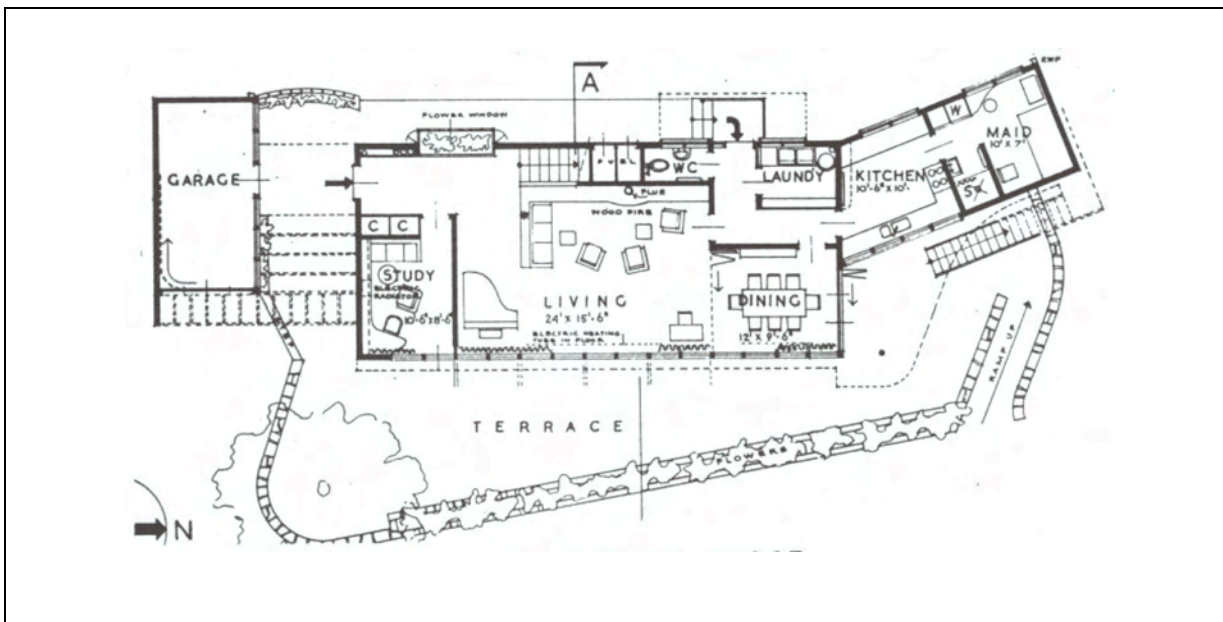


Figure 4-48. Arthur Baldwinson. Ground floor plan of £2000 House, 1938. Timber Development Association. Baldwinson papers, PXE 778, Volume 4.

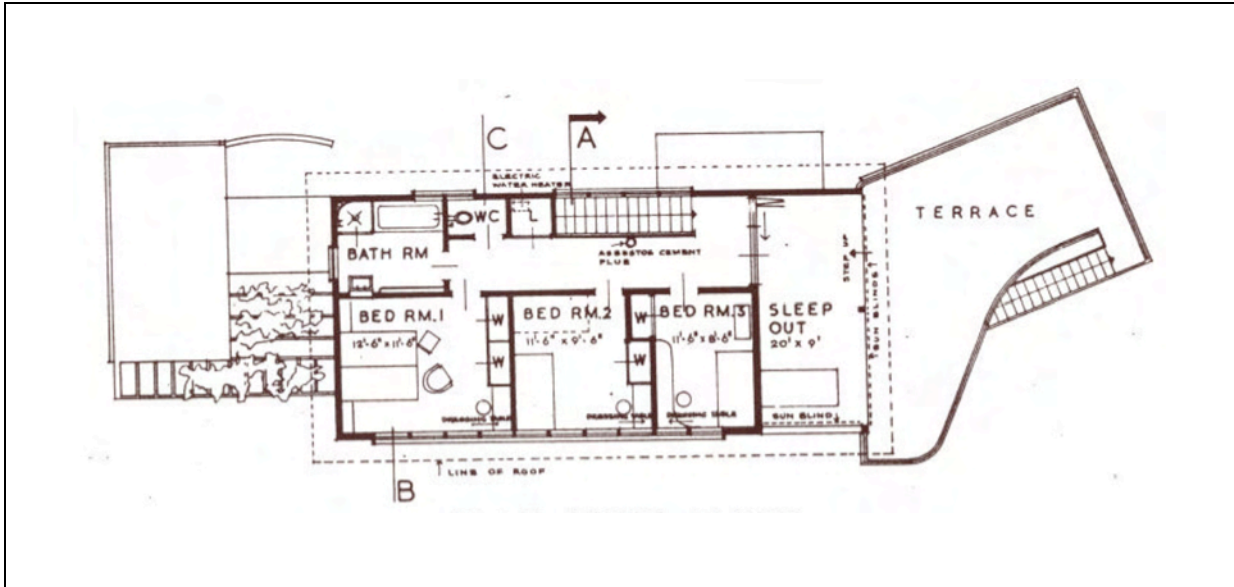


Figure 4-49. Arthur Baldwinson. First floor plan of £2000 House, 1938. Timber Development Association. Baldwinson papers, PXE 778, Volume 4.

The £2000 House shows Baldwinson's early houses at their best. The ambitious floor plan for this project illustrates a linear planned house that extends itself effortlessly over the landscape providing light, views and most importantly for the Australian setting, physical and visual access to the out-of-doors. It also draws on the curves of the Benn Levy house commission with Gropius and Fry.

The use of local free stone in paving, patios and retaining walls is also a shared element in these three categories. While his interior planning of the living and dining spaces do not embrace the radical European "free plan" concepts, Baldwinson's shared spaces acknowledge important shifts in contemporary living patterns.

Following his success with the Timber Development Association awards, Baldwinson continued his work with the TDA by taking up commissions for articles for the *Australian Timber Journal*. From 1938 to 1941, Baldwinson produced over 18 articles for their bi-monthly *Journal*.⁴¹⁶ He contributed essays on such topics as "Modern Furniture. Its Fitness for Purpose",⁴¹⁷ "Exhibitions. Their Influence on Future Designs",⁴¹⁸ and "Timber Cottage Construction in Sweden".⁴¹⁹ After February 1941, fellow Gordon graduate Tom O'Mahony assumed his editorial role at the magazine.

⁴¹⁶ See the bibliography for a listing of Baldwinson writings in the *Australian Timber Journal*.

⁴¹⁷ *The Australian Timber Journal*, Oct.-Nov. 1939, pps.679-680, 719.

⁴¹⁸ *The Australian Timber Journal*, Jan.-Feb. 1940, pps.20-21, 57.

⁴¹⁹ *The Australian Timber Journal*, May-June 1940, pps.292-293, 307.

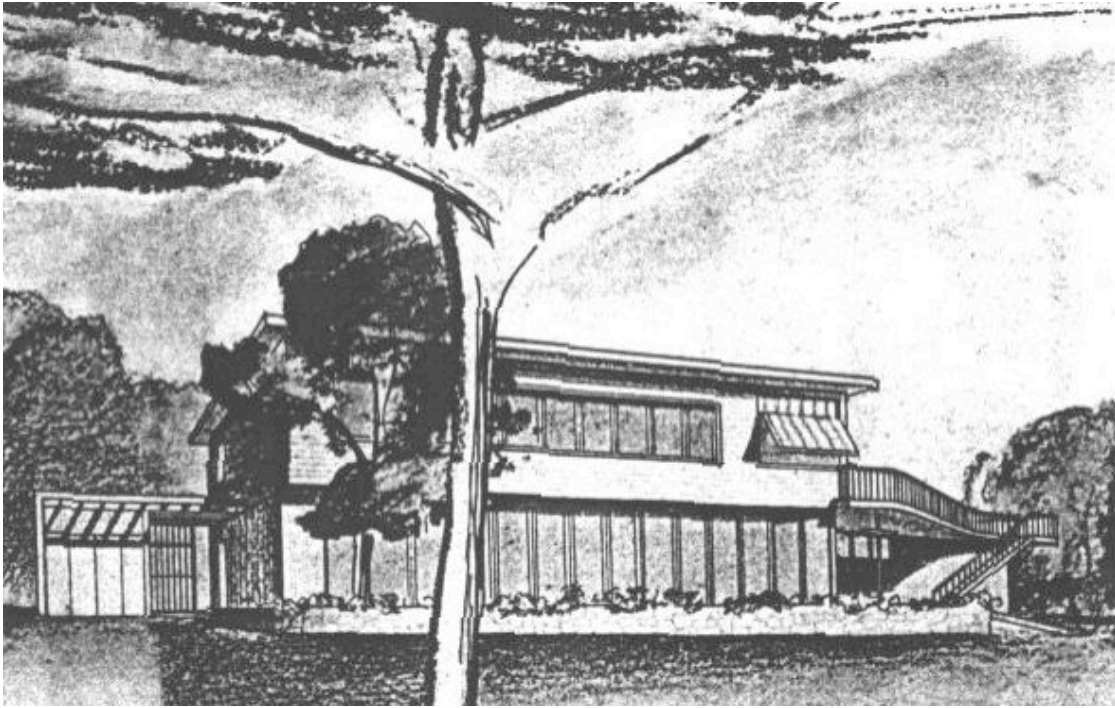


Figure 4-50. Arthur Baldwinson. Perspective of the £2000 House, 1938. Timber Development Association. Baldwinson papers, PXE 778, Volume 4.

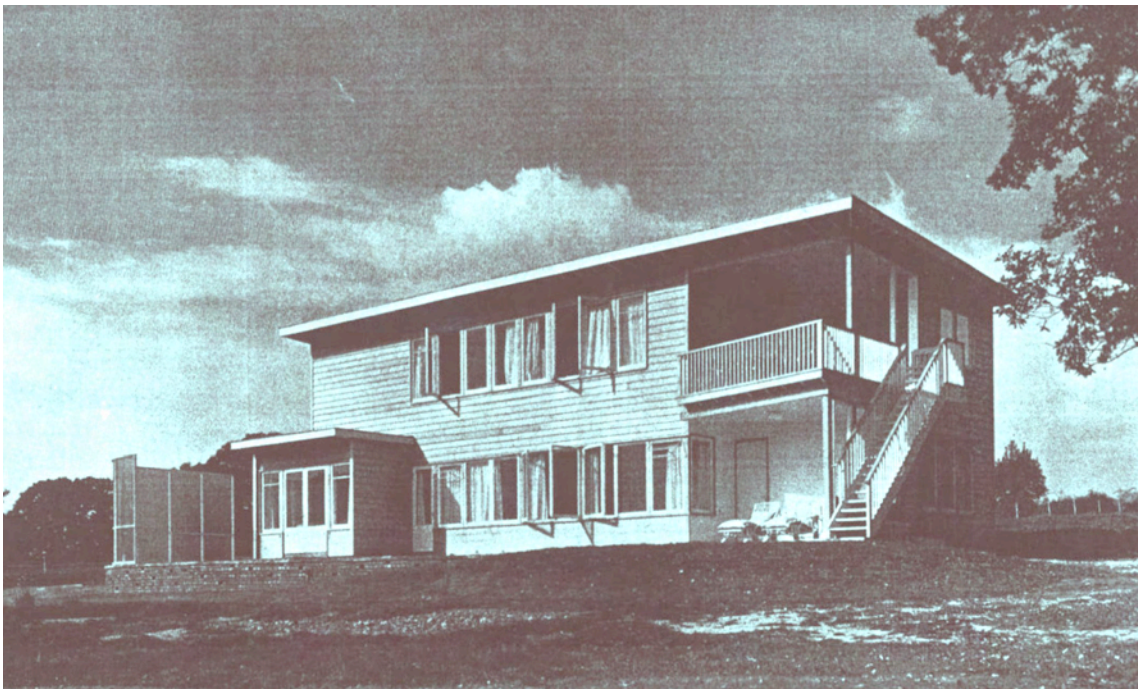


Figure 4-51. Gropius and Fry. The Donaldson House, Sevenoaks, Shipbourne, 1936. *The Architectural Review*. "A Timber House in Kent." February 1938, pps.61-63.

The TDA continued to promote Baldwinson's three award-winning houses throughout 1939 in the domestic press and through exhibitions. In July 1939, the Victorian TDA was involved in an exhibition at the David Jones Department Store Gallery in Sydney under the auspices of the Timber Development Association of Australia, the NSW Forestry Commission and the Sydney Modern Architecture Research Society (MARS). This exhibition, the 1939 "Better Homes Exhibition", also included a model of the Baldwinson £2000 house.

The Better Homes Exhibition, arranged by the Forestry Commission of NSW, under the Auspices of the Timber Development Association of Australia (NSW Branch) opened on 4 July 1939. This exhibition (the third in a series begun in 1937) comprises: "... models and drawings of the prize-winning designs in the Australian Homes from the Australian Forests Competition and the Timber Homes Competition recently conducted by the Timber Development Association of Victoria.

*David Jones Ltd have again this year placed at the disposal of the Forestry Commission, their George Street store for the exhibition and the official opening was presided over by their Chairman of Directors, Charles Lloyd Jones, who when introducing the Hon. R. S. Vincent, said that the public of NSW should appreciate the value they had in their wonderful forests and should take care of them.*⁴²⁰

BALDWINSON AND PRIVATE PRACTICE

With the successes of the TDA awards for domestic architecture, Arthur Baldwinson began private practice in October 1938, working from the flat that he and Elspeth shared at No. 9 "Holkham", Reddall Street, Manly. Soon afterward, Baldwinson became involved in one of his first jobs, alterations and additions to a hotel at Ocean Beach, Manly owned (or managed) by the Far West Children's Health Scheme, a charitable organization dedicated to assisting children from rural or isolated areas of NSW.⁴²¹

Baldwinson's role as Honorary Architect was to re-work the beachfront façade for the hotel and work through some alterations to the interior to form a hostel and cafe. This façade work captures some of Baldwinson's British materials palette at this time. His specifications for the façade, a radical reworking of a conventional façade into an example of 1930s British modernism, called for the use of Vitrolite, vitreous enamel panels and new rendered brickwork, painted white.⁴²² The client representative was Stan Pike, a surname that was to reappear in Baldwinson's job files throughout the 1940s.

⁴²⁰ "1939 Better Homes Exhibition." *The Australian Timber Journal*. June-July 1939, p.347.

⁴²¹ The Far West Children's Health Scheme is now known as the Royal Far West Children's Health Scheme. They continue to own the site on Ocean Beach, Manly.

⁴²² Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792. Proposal for the Plaza Hotel, Ocean Beach, Manly. Far West Children's Health Scheme, 1939-45.



Figure 4-52. Arthur Baldwinson. “Proposed New Front”, The Plaza, Ocean Beach, Manly, 1941. Further papers. MLMSS 7792, Job File, Stan Pike. Proposal for the Plaza Hotel, Ocean Beach, Manly, 1939-45.

By early 1939, Baldwinson’s documented portfolio of Australian residential designs (unbuilt) included three Timber Development Association (TDA) award-winning houses (1938); three “type form” domestic dwelling projects for a South Coast Housing Scheme (1939) working as Oldham and Baldwinson (discussed in the following chapter); a design for “Fairlands” a four-storey apartment building in Manly known through a gouache rendering; redesign of the façade and internal plan of the Plaza hotel, Ocean Beach, Manly; a sketch elevation of one residence and a plan for a “holiday cabin” for the *Australian Timber Journal*.⁴²³

Baldwinson had a more than ample supply of designs and ideas but he had yet to build. With the spectacular success of the Timber Development Association awards, he was relying on the extensive media coverage to launch his Australian career. The opportunity soon came.

In 1938, he was approached by the Sydney merchant Williams Collins for a design for a residence at Lot 8 (1170), Barrenjoey Road, Palm Beach, north of Sydney.⁴²⁴ The job file opens on 5 October 1938.⁴²⁵ Baldwinson’s 1938 notebook records his site sketch of the topography and notes for his first site meeting with the builder: “Catch 8.36 bus. Meet on site

⁴²³ The holiday cabin appears in A.N. Baldwinson. “Week-End Houses.” *Australian Timber Journal*, April-May 1939, p.210-254. The residential design was shown in the MARS exhibition at David Jones Art Gallery and reproduced in *Australian Timber Journal*, March-April 1940, p.159.

⁴²⁴ Baldwinson’s notebook records W. Collins, Collins and Son Ltd, Cork Merchants and Metal Stampers.

⁴²⁵ Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1992, Box 4408.

Saturday morning. Collins says Gonsalves [the first builder/excavator] ready to start work today.”⁴²⁶

The Collins House, Palm Beach, 1938

The Collins house established much of the methodology for residential architectural design that Baldwinson was to use throughout his career. Most significantly, he revelled in difficult sites. Not only did the sandstone escarpments found in coastal New South Wales provide dramatic settings for his architecture, the stone recovered from the site was put to use for foundations, building podiums, fireplaces, retaining walls and freestone paths.



Figure 4-53. Arthur Baldwinson. The Collins House, 1938. *Australian Timber Journal*, November 1939.

Many of the job files in the Baldwinson papers also show his considerable sympathy for topography. His residential design studies often begin with a tracing paper overlay on the surveyor’s site plan that takes the relative levels of the terrain as a guide for adjusting the house to the site. Baldwinson’s career illustrates that he had an active dislike of extensive excavations, preferring to work with the lay of the land and the potential views.

The Collins House site was a difficult location on a steep north-facing sandstone and clay slope with long views of Barrenjoey Head and Broken Bay. Some excavation was required for the footings and the approach to the house followed a ramp concealed behind ashlar

⁴²⁶ Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792, Professional Notebooks. 1938-39.

terracing. The ramp led to an external steel staircase. At the top of this stair, a cantilevered verandah gave access to the living room, kitchen and master bedroom. The house also provided two bedrooms and a “playroom” on the lower level accessible via the external stair. There was no internal hall communicating with the main living areas.

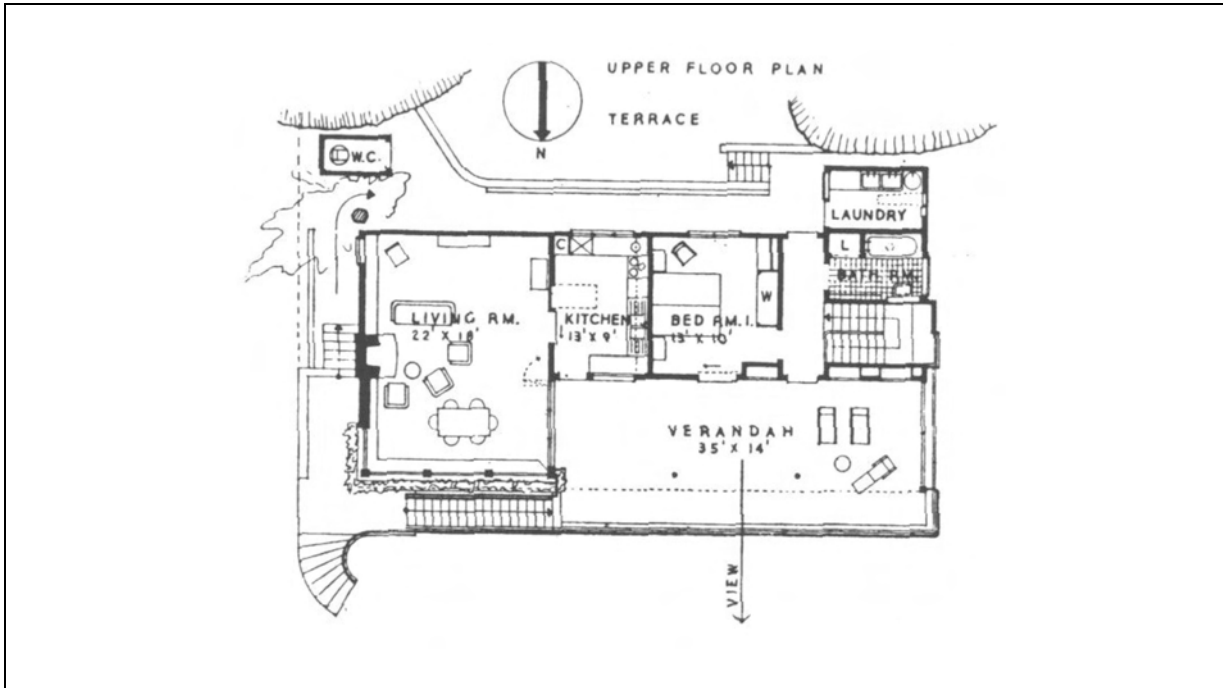


Figure 4-54. Arthur Baldwinson. Upper floor plan of the Collins House, 1938. In George Beiers, *Houses of Australia*, 1948.

Designed as a “weekender”, the living room opened onto a generous balcony. This balcony, or more appropriately labelled as the verandah, replaced the traditional internal hall to provide access to the upper level rooms. In adapting the verandah to the modernist building form, Baldwinson took his place amongst the many Australian architects to sketch out the philosophical connections between the functions of the traditional Australian verandah and the nation’s social and cultural milieu.

Like many of the modernists in 1930s Australia who were hampered by the difficulties of obtaining large sheets of plate glass, Baldwinson often linked his timber-sashed windows in strips and these timber sash windows lower into the wall cavities. This fenestration grouping and white timber framing helped diminish the solidity of external walls providing light, ventilation and the softening of visual massing. Reflecting Raymond McGrath’s enthusiasm for architectural glass, Baldwinson employed opaque glass for the balustrade and the western wall of the verandah.

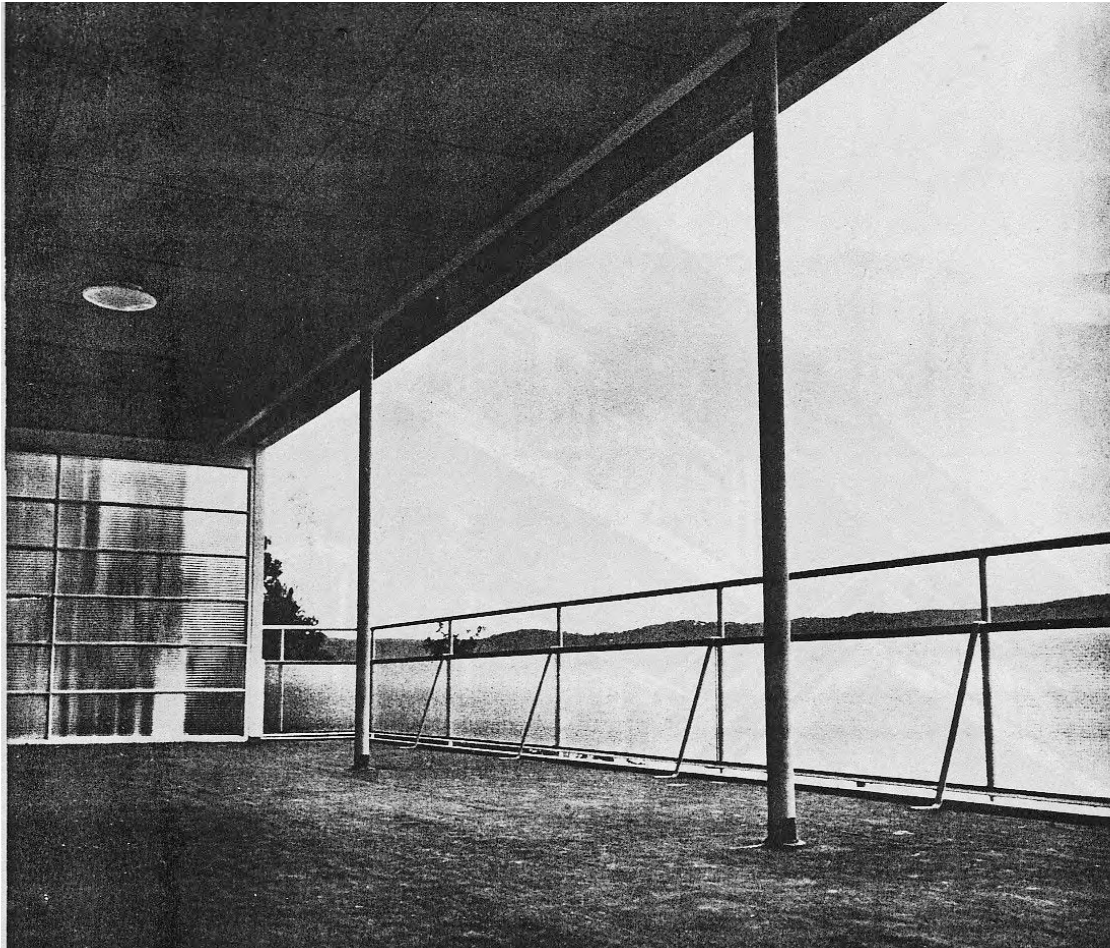


Figure 4-55. Arthur Baldwinson. Opaque glass on the verandah of the Collins House, 1938. “Design for Leisure.” *The Home*, 1 November 1941, p.36.

For the Collins House, Baldwinson also provided a “Scientific Kitchen” in the Frankfurt Kitchen style pioneered in 1925 by Margarete Shutte-Lihotzky, complete with drop-down table, rubbish chute, stools, the latest electrical appliances and, of course, a prominent clock.⁴²⁷ It is important to note that the Collins House kitchen opens to the outdoor zone as well as the living and dining areas. This kitchen is amongst the first residential “Scientific Kitchens” recorded in Australia as they are found in a crude form in the Griffin houses, Castlecrag (1920s) and in Best Overend’s Cairo flats (1936).

⁴²⁷ Karin Kirsch. *Der Weissenhofsiedlung*. Rizzoli, 1987 (English translation 1989), pps. 25-27. The Shutte-Lihotzky “Frankfurt Kitchen” was developed for Ernst May’s Public Housing Project in Frankfurt-am-Main in 1925 but popularised by its appearance during the Weissenhof Exhibition in 1927 where Mies, Oud and others developed kitchen projects.

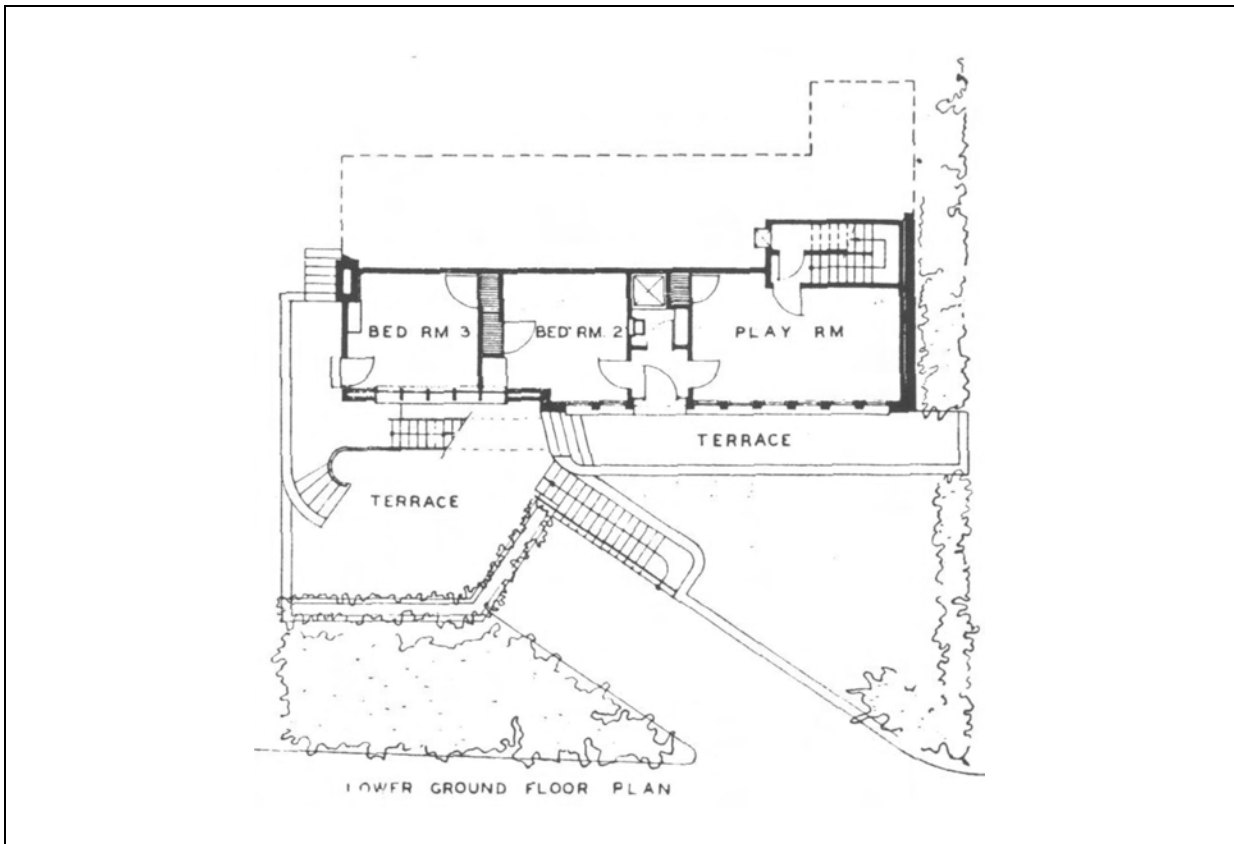


Figure 4-56. Arthur Baldwinson. Lower floor plan of the Collins House, 1938. Reproduced from George Beiers, *Houses of Australia*, 1948.

The selection of regional timbers for external and internal use is another feature of the developing Baldwinson style. Baldwinson, perhaps recalling his involvement with the Sevenoaks House, Kent (1936), chose Sydney blue-gum weatherboard for the Collins House cladding and stained it a dark red. Internally, the living room walls were panelled in floor-to-ceiling Victorian silver ash veneer. Baldwinson also designed the living room and dining suite furniture in silver ash with primary-coloured upholstery in red and blue.

The use of colour introduced in the Collins House is another motif that Baldwinson carried though his career. Early reviewers of the house commented on the dark red weatherboard, the white window trim and the “lime yellow” used on the doors, garage door and accents. One of the early reviews of the house by Bunning also commented on the detail of the pale blue-grey paint of the undercroft of the balcony “...to form an alliance with the sky”.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁸ Walter Bunning, “Design for Leisure,” *The Home*, 1 November 1941, p.39.



Figure 4-57. Arthur Baldwinson. The Collins House, 1938. North-eastern elevation. Photograph James Andriesse. *The Home*, 1 November, 1941. The house has been much altered and another storey added.

The job files for the Collins House are some of the most extensive in the Baldwinson collection. Hardware, timber finishes, stonework and paint were carefully chosen. As his first built work, Baldwinson understood its importance. In a 2 June 1939 letter to his second site contractor, Mr J. B. Wise, Baldwinson writes: “I intend this house to be widely published in journals and will show it myself; so you will understand that only first class joinery and fitting can be allowed.”

In a 13 May letter to Mr Wise, the architect includes a sketch design for the sign-writer to create a sign for the front of the house during its construction. Mr Wise is invited to add his name if he wishes.⁴²⁹ Certain of its aesthetic success, Baldwinson promoted the house in the *Australian Timber Journal* in 1940 well before it was finished in 1941.⁴³⁰



Figure 4-58. Arthur Baldwinson. The Collins House, 1938. The living room. Dufaycolour photographs. *The Home*, 1 November, 1941.⁴³¹

Baldwinson had learned the importance of good photography, domestic press coverage as well as producing outstanding architecture. The house received considerable attention in the print media with a feature article “Design for Leisure” by Walter Bunning for the November 1941 edition of *The Home*.⁴³² The feature in *The Home* also included two exceptional printed colour photographs by R.E. Moffat in the “Dufaycolour” process. As mentioned earlier, Bunning’s review of the Collins House concluded, “Taking this house as a whole, its level of

⁴²⁹ Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792, Job Files, 1939-40. Collins House.

⁴³⁰ Arthur Baldwinson. “House at Palm Beach NSW for W. Collins, Esq.” *Australian Timber Journal*, October-November 1939, pps.613-614.

⁴³¹ Baldwinson’s pendant lamp also appears in “The Week End House” interiors designed by Serge Chermayeff in 1933 for the Exhibition of British Industrial Art. See illustration in Alan Powers, *Serge Chermayeff*, p.48.

⁴³² Walter Bunning, op. cit., pps.37-39.

aesthetic achievement will undoubtedly be branded by the future historian as a landmark in the development of contemporary architecture in Australia.”⁴³³

The Collins House next appeared in *Architecture*.⁴³⁴ The house also continued to be discussed throughout the 1940s with another feature by W.A. Somerset in *Australian Home Beautiful* in 1944.⁴³⁵ Most significantly, the Collins House was used on the cover of George Beiers’ 1948 survey of domestic architecture, *Houses of Australia*, published by Sydney Ure Smith, the former publisher of *The Home* and *Art in Australia*. This was ten years after its completion.

The excitement created by the Collins House was rarely duplicated in Baldwinson’s other pre-war commissions and with the exception of the Kingsford-Smith House of 1940, much of the remainder of his work before the declaration of war consisted of unrealised projects and alterations and additions.

The Kingsford-Smith House, Taylors Point, 1940

Although the records of Baldwinson’s practice show that he had opened 36 new job files by January 1940, his only major built commission was a generously scaled “weekender”. The client was the E. L. Kingsford-Smith family for their isolated bushland site at Lot 129, Hudson Parade, Taylors Point NSW.⁴³⁶ The Kingsford-Smith family (descendents of Charles Kingsford-Smith, d.1935) operated the College of Civil Aviation, 255 George Street, Sydney.

The location was on the western side of the Barrenjoey peninsula on a wooded slope overlooking the reaches of Pittwater. Like the Collins House, the structure was sited on a steep gradient stabilised by a series of back-filled sandstone retaining walls. These walls formed terraces that provided a multi-level platform for the house.

The house form was produced by two intersecting weatherboard-clad rectangles extending to the north and east forming a pinwheel plan with echoes of his earlier TDA award-winning houses of 1938. The distinctiveness of these two forms is further emphasised by their differing heights and their opposing skillion roof pitches. An unusual notched corner on the northwest elevation further enhanced the effect of these two intersecting rectangular volumes. One of the roof pitches was flat and this produced anxiety in the clients. In 28 October 1940, the Kingsford-Smiths wrote to the builder George Hodgson and Son about water pooling on this flat roof and asking for a remedy.⁴³⁷ Hodgson’s response is not recorded.

⁴³³ *ibid.*, p.39.

⁴³⁴ *Architecture*, 1 July 1940, p.135.

⁴³⁵ W.A. Somerset. *Australian Home Beautiful*. May, 1944, pps.6-9.

⁴³⁶ “Timber Week-End House.” *Australian Timber Journal*, January-February 1940, pps.27, 33.

⁴³⁷ Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792, Job file. Kingsford-Smith. W. Kingsford-Smith to George Hodgson and Son 28 October 1940.



Figure 4-59. Arthur Baldwinson. Kingsford-Smith House from the north-western corner. 1940. Photograph Max Dupain. In Beiers, *Houses of Australia*. This elevation features the recessed corner.

The house is built in cypress pine weatherboards in stark white paint, with the soffit of the verandah in grey-blue and the soffit of the eaves in sulphur yellow.⁴³⁸ The job file in the Baldwinson papers was open from 1939 to 1941.⁴³⁹

As in the earlier Collins House, the Sevenoaks House (1936) also has a role to play in the design of the Kingsford-Smith house. The projecting porch supported by steel posts is found in the Gropius and Fry house. Sevenoaks also included an array of roof plans and planes to each elevation and featured deep eaves with exposed rafters painted in contrasting colours. This is a device also employed by Romberg and Shaw in their Glenunga Flats of 1940.

⁴³⁸ "Timber Week-End House" Perspective rendering illustrated in *Australian Timber Journal*, January-February 1940, p.27.

⁴³⁹ This commission is described in Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792, Job Files, 1939-41.

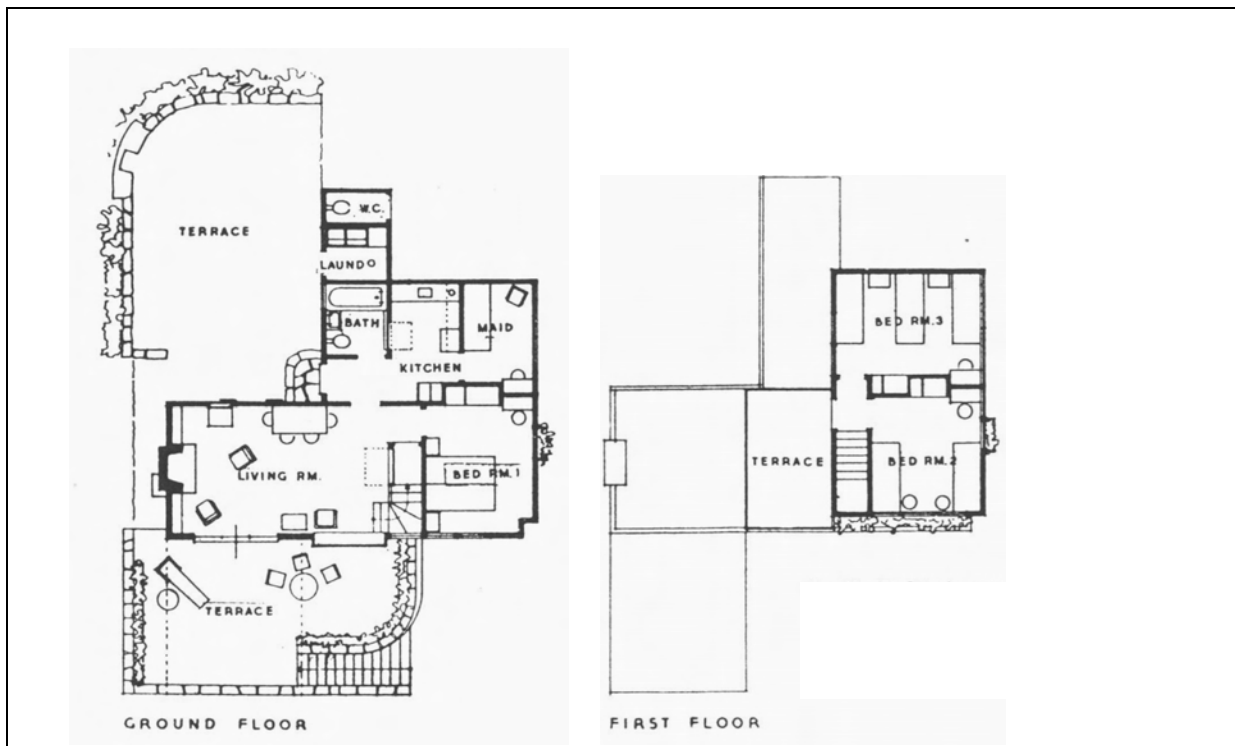


Figure 4-60. Arthur Baldwinson. Kingsford-Smith House, 1940. Ground floor and first floor. *Australian Home Beautiful*, April 1944. The plan adjusted to the site.

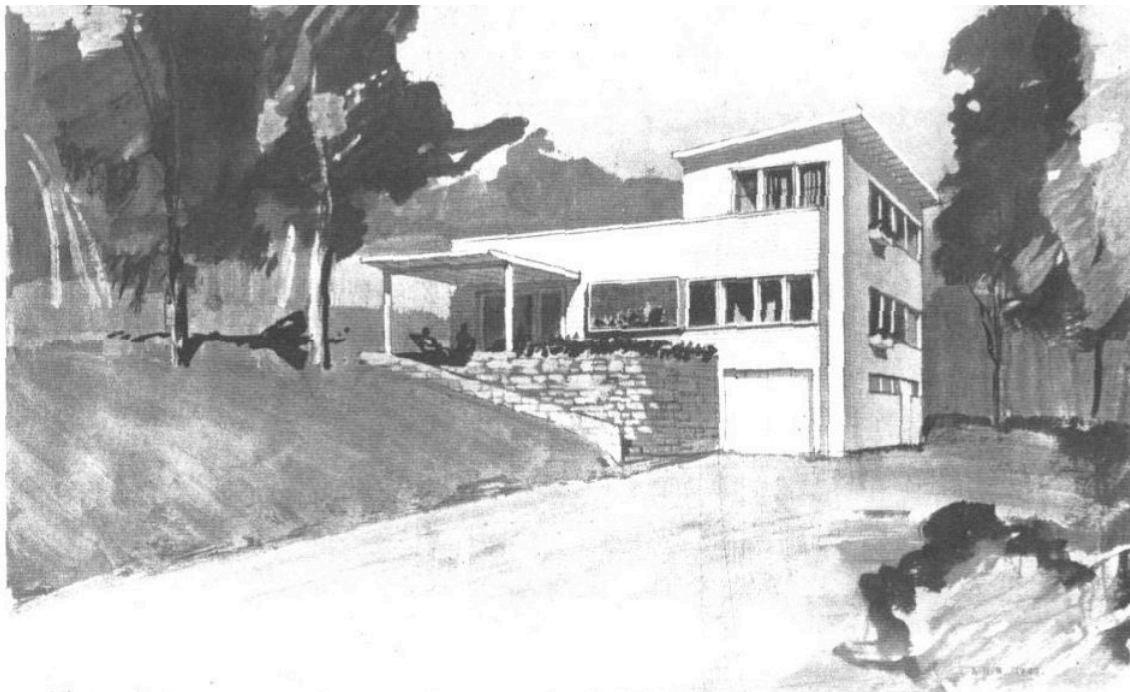


Figure 4-61. Arthur Baldwinson. Kingsford-Smith House, 1940. Perspective of northern elevation, 1939. *Timber Design Journal*. January-February 1940, p.27.

This house was always described as a “weekender” and featured three expansive terraces (ground and level one) to capture views and encourage the outdoor living associated with the mild climate associated with this sheltered Pittwater area of the Sydney basin. It is worth noting that this area of Pittwater was not sewered at the time of construction and an outdoor WC was provided, the unfailing signifier of the “weekender”.



Figure 4-62. Gropius and Fry. Sevenoaks. 1936. This recently restored house features a similar array of roof planes adapted for the Kingsford-Smith House as well as the extended entrance porch supported by steel posts. Alan Powers, *Modern. The Modern Movement in Britain*, p.129.

Amongst Baldwinson’s next commissions was the A. J. Whitmore House project (1940), also known as the “Artist’s House”, Thornleigh.⁴⁴⁰ The Whitmore House design was not built to his original plan. The description of the original design is drawn from a full colour illustration in the 1940 issue of *Art in Australia*. The text was probably drawn from a technical description supplied by Baldwinson and adapted and embellished by one of *Art in Australia*’s writers, probably Walter Bunning.

⁴⁴⁰ “An Artist’s House at Thornleigh, NSW.” *Art in Australia*, August 23, 1940, p.74.

An interview with Karla Whitmore, daughter of the client, reveals that while the house was designed as a skillion-roofed residence, this feature was abandoned for a gabled roof during construction. A bagged brick exterior wall was also deleted and fibrous cement sheet and weatherboard used for exterior cladding.⁴⁴¹ Wartime economies prevented Baldwinson's design from reaching its potential. The client, Dick Whitmore, was a commercial artist specialising in advertising work and one of the first of many artists who used Baldwinson's services.

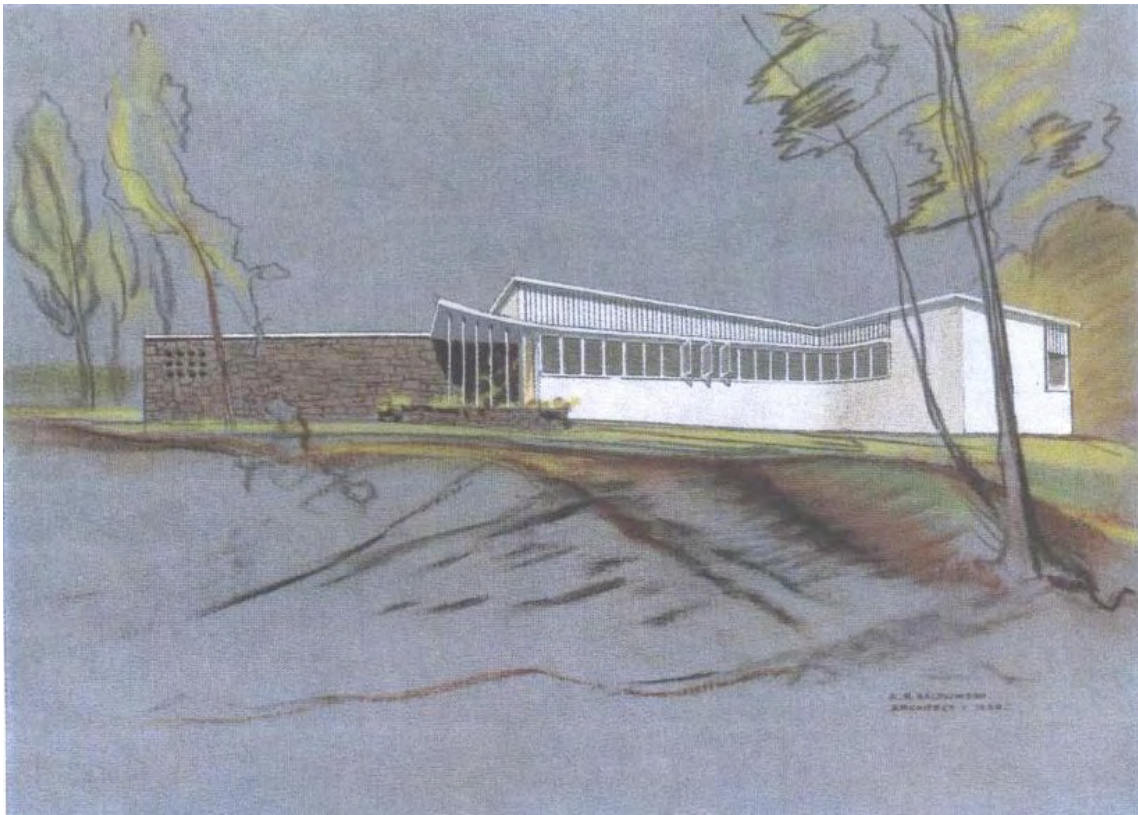


Figure 4-63. Arthur Baldwinson. Perspective, the Whitmore House, 1940. *Australia*, 23 August 1940.

Baldwinson's original L-shape, long skillion roof, window treatments and elevations were ignored during the construction of the Whitmore House (Parks Street and Fox Valley Road, Comenarra Parkway) and it is best described as a project. The *Art in Australia* description, however, is generous.

The house is set in three and one-half acres of bushland, which provides a charming setting for this excellent design. The main external walls are flush-jointed brick, painted white. The walling above the long line of windows is vertical weatherboarding with vertical cover battens also painted white. The dark brown sandstone random rubble wall planned at an

⁴⁴¹ Transcript of memoir "Inspired by Baldwinson. An artist's house at Thornleigh" supplied by Karla Whitmore, descendent of Dick Whitmore, February 2004.

*angle to the general walling and stone flower boxes provide an enriching and decorative contrast to the white brickwork. A change in levels in the house has dictated a long skillion roof.*⁴⁴²

BALDWINSON PROJECTS

The dramatic design of the house for Talmadge Craig, Cammeray (1938-39) known through a coloured perspective drawn by Baldwinson in the Baldwinson Papers in the State Library, was an extraordinary vision. But, as Greg Holman noted, “The first designs for Talmadge Craig’s house promised a unique solution for its time; however, this promise remained unfulfilled in the final result.”⁴⁴³ Like the Whitmore House, the Talmadge House is best described as a project. It does, however, suggest the influences of Raymond McGrath’s practice.



Figure 4-64. Arthur Baldwinson. Perspective of a house for Talmadge Craig Esq., 1938 (detail). Baldwinson papers, PXD 356/1294.

Elements of the circular composition echoed some of the elements of Raymond McGrath’s design for the so-called “St Ann’s Hill” residence of 1936.⁴⁴⁴ McGrath uses a cylindrical composition of three levels of reinforced concrete set into a Christopher Tunnard landscape design.⁴⁴⁵ A flat roof surrounded by a steel balustrade provides views and recreational space. Baldwinson’s design for the Talmadge Craig House parts company, however, with all of the

⁴⁴² “An Artist’s House at Thornleigh NSW.” Colour illustration. *Art in Australia*, 23 August 1940, p.74.

⁴⁴³ Holman, op. cit., p.106.

⁴⁴⁴ This Australian house was designed for the London stockbroker, A.L. Schlesinger.

⁴⁴⁵ See Donal O’Donovan. *God’s Architect. A Life of Raymond McGrath*. Kilbridge Book, 1995. pps.169-176 for a discussion of this house.

British concrete cylinder precedents in the work of Tecton, Wells Coates, Mendelsohn and Chermayeff, McGrath and others in its substantial three-level cantilevered wing projecting from the slope of the hillside setting.

Although Baldwinson's original vision for the Craig house was not realized, elements of his 1930s architectural style are present in the design. Like the Collins House, the architect uses sandstone-faced terraces to anchor the house to the earth while using a cantilevered upper element to capture a view or vista. A ramp leads to the front entrance. The Baldwinson palette is also present in the 1938 rendering: a light blue in the concrete undercroft of the circular pavilion, a pink wash covers the wall nearest the entrance while a citrus yellow is used for the garage entrance. The Craig house also features Baldwinson's intention to fully integrate the motorcar garage into the unified composition of this suburban residence.



Figure 4-65. Arthur Baldwinson. Detail, “Proposed Flats at Fairlands, Ashburner Street Manly.”, 1938. Baldwinson papers, PXD 736, item 360.

The client for Baldwinson's Fairlands Flats project (1938-39), Ashburner Street Manly is listed as “Lingham”.⁴⁴⁶ “Lingham” was also the address of the 1938-39 practice of Oldham and Baldwinson, Architects.⁴⁴⁷ This may have been the home of John Oldham. The project, (illustrated above) with a gouache sketch, did not progress. The balconies, entranceways and

⁴⁴⁶ Greg Holmes, Job No.13, p.296.

⁴⁴⁷ Their brief practice (discussed in Chapter 5) is recorded as Oldham and Baldwinson, Architects, 10a Fairlands, Ashburner Street, Manly, telephone XU 2768.

glass brick illuminated stairwells demonstrate elements of his London experience with McGrath and Maxwell Fry.

This Levey House project, Dover Heights, (1940) was designed for G.H. Levey for a steep site on 207 Military Road, Dover Heights is notable only for the insight it provides for the architect and client relationship. The house was not commissioned. In this project, Baldwinson demonstrates the extraordinary design flexibility required by the residential architect. Baldwinson's job file for the Levey House opens on 23 February 1940 and shows sketches and two perspectives. Like the earlier Baldwinson houses, the use of the automobile is fully integrated into the elevation.

Typical of the steep slopes of the Sydney area, the house presents two levels to the street. Baldwinson's design terminates with a flat roof (or perhaps a skillion roof) behind the timber parapet. The perspective and sketches show an asymmetrical composition in rendered masonry with cantilevered sunscreens above the timber sash windows and garage doors.

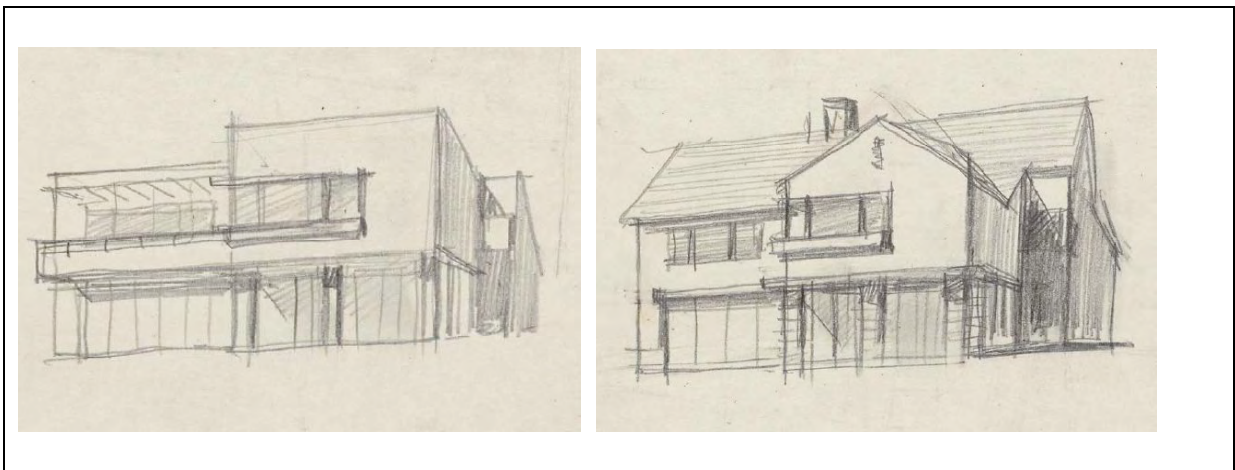


Figure 4-66. Arthur Baldwinson. Sketch elevations for the Levey House, 1940. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, Box Y440, Job files, 1939-1957. G.H. Levey.

Mr Levey was a difficult client and the two wildly different sketches in the job file suggest a client unsure of his wishes. Baldwinson's 9 September 1940 Memo of Interview with Mr G. H. Levey is the last entry in the file. "Mr Levey called [by] at my office. [...] Levey said he did not feel inclined to pay fees for some work that was of no use to him. I pointed out that the drawings were prepared by his instructions and that I would make any amendments required by Council. Levey is proceeding with a different scheme for the house..."⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁸ Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1992, BOX Y4403, Job files, 1939-1957. G.H. Levey.



Figure 4-67. Arthur Baldwinson. Perspective. The Levey House project, 1940. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, Box Y440, Job files, 1939-1957. G.H. Levey.

CONCLUSION

As he was struggling with Mr Levey during September 1940, Baldwinson was reluctantly beginning a new career as the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation's (CAC) Principal Architect at Lidcombe.⁴⁴⁹ This war work occupies most of his architectural practice until 1945 when he returns to Sydney with Elspeth to revive his career in the partnership of Gibson and Baldwinson.

While Baldwinson's most significant designs and projects in this brief pre-war period are described above, he continued to design for domestic clients in the Sydney region until mid-1941 when most of his energy is devoted to the CAC's projects in Victoria and South Australia. Before wartime duties took him from his practice, Baldwinson had been able to carry out two notable commissions, the Collins House and the Kingsford-Smith House in Sydney northern suburbs.

The architect's pre-war opportunities to see new Melbourne work from the modernists Overend, Romberg and Grounds makes Baldwinson into a bridging figure between new Victorian work and the nascent modernism of Sydney that he will help to bring to life.

Despite building only two notable commissions, Baldwinson's output following his return to Australia was outstanding. Before he was called away for war work in late 1940, he had won

⁴⁴⁹ Holmes, op. cit., p.108.

all three classes of the Victorian Timber Development Prize for three residential designs in the £500, £850 and £2000 categories. In 1938, his £2000 house was one of Australia's more advanced modernist compositions of the decade. He was well aware that these competitions would help him launch his career and his correspondence with his Collins House builder suggests that he intended to build his career on these early successes.

The early built work such as the Collins House and the Kingsford-Smith House illustrate his inventive powers in composing for a particular siting. The work suggests a responsiveness to "place" (landscape, topography, materials, views and vistas) that belongs to the genre of the Australian holiday home or the "weekender". This sensitivity to site, however, is something that Baldwinson continued with his conventional residential practice. His residential style suggests the beginnings of a "Regional" approach to modernism drawing on Victorian architectural precedents, local materials, embracing the site, developing plans for an Australian climate and infusing something of the "Weekender" into most of his domestic designs.

After the war, when Baldwinson began to rebuild his career, he designed many other site-responsive houses. These designs used simple materials in a limited palette of colours. He kept his vocabulary of modernist forms and adapted them to the Sydney topography of thin soil, sandstone escarpments and long views. His earliest job files show that he always began his design work by a close study of the site. This is a practice he continued throughout his career.

Although his brief contractual career of eighteen months with Stephenson & Turner has led to Baldwinson attributions for a range of the commercial projects during the late 1930s, there is no supporting evidence within the Baldwinson papers for major involvement in the design for the Stephenson & Turner ACI Building. His records demonstrate that he developed the designs for the ACI Building ground floor trade display as well as the 1939 Worlds Fair pavilion interiors in New York where he designed the cantilevered steel chairs. Furniture design, along with his furniture work for the Collins House, is not an area that he continued to develop. His major role with Stephenson & Turner, as consistently described by staff members at the time, was in the preparation of presentation drawings and sketches. This role is well-supported by signed presentation drawings such as those associated with the Darwin Hotel.

Baldwinson's role as a team member within the Stephenson & Turner practice is further illustrated in John Oldham's memoir where Baldwinson is described as a supportive staff member who willingly shared his experience and expertise with other members of the office. It is this generous quality, perhaps, that encouraged Oldham and Baldwinson to form a brief partnership for the South Coast Housing Commission project described in the following chapter.

Indeed, there was very little time for any significant involvement in commercial while he was designing three entries for the Timber Development Association's competition, developing projects and designing and building two commissions. The following chapter will also discuss his work in establishing the modernist doctrine in Sydney while serving on the

founding committee of the Modern Architecture Research Society (MARS) and as an original member of the Designers and Industries Association of Australia (DIAA). His marriage to Elspeth Lee-Lewes must also be included amongst his accomplishments from February 1937 to August 1940 before war work began to capture his full attention.

INTRODUCTION

Like many of the well-travelled architects of his generation, Baldwinson returned to Australia full of reforming zeal. In Sydney, he helped organise and administer two new design organisations, the Modern Architecture Research Society (MARS) and the Design and Industries Association of Australia (DIAA) that sought to introduce a wide range of reforms in architecture and design.

Baldwinson became a member of the inaugural committee for a Sydney chapter of the Modern Architecture Research Society (MARS) that grew to include some of the Sydney architectural profession's most progressive members. The Sydney MARS group included such notable figures as Eric Andrew (NSW Institute of Architects (later RAIA) Sulman Award winner), the writer and Sulman Award-winning architect and planner Walter Bunning, the designer and writer R. Haughton ("Jimmy") James, landscape architect and designer John Oldham, the NSW Institute of Architects (later RAIA) Sulman Award winner Gerard H. B. McDonell, timber prefabrication innovator Chris Van Dyke and the architect and architectural historian Morton Herman.

While the MARS group was politically active in the 1930s, few of their challenges to the NSW Institute of Architects (later RAIA) continued after the 1939-45 War. As a consequence of their agitation, a number of former MARS members became active in the NSW Institute of Architects chapter and members of the all-important Sulman Award committee. As the premier modernist organisation in NSW, it is surprising to note those architects not recorded as members of MARS; this includes the proto-modernists John Brogan, Bruce Dellit, and the seminal Sydney modernist, Sydney Ancher.

THE MODERN ARCHITECTURE RESEARCH SOCIETY (MARS) IN BRITAIN

The British MARS Group (1933-1957) was forming during Baldwinson's first year in London. While his precise involvement in it is unknown, Baldwinson had associations with many of its early members including Wells Coates (working out of McGrath's office) and Maxwell Fry (Baldwinson's employer after 1934). Baldwinson later became active in the Australian variant of MARS in Sydney and the ARG (Architectural Research Group) in Melbourne.

One of *The Architectural Review's* principal writers, P. (Paul) Morton Shand, was asked by the Swiss historian Sigfried Giedion, secretary of the *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM) to be Britain's representative. On 28 February 1933, a meeting in London of Wells Coates, Maxwell Fry, David Pleydell-Bouverie, P. Morton Shand, H. de Cronin Hastings of *The Architectural Review* (AR) and John Gloag set out the principles of MARS.⁴⁵⁰ This account differs radically from Maxwell Fry's version of the formation of MARS. In Fry's version, Wells Coates, Shand and Maxwell Fry developed the MARS name and issued its first manifesto.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁵⁰ Laura Cohn. *The Door to a Secret Room*. A portrait of Wells Coates. Scholar Press, 1999. pps.41-41.

⁴⁵¹ Maxwell Fry, *Autobiographical Sketches*. Elek, 1975, p.140.

The four principles of the British MARS were:

- To formulate contemporary architectural problems;
- To represent the modern architectural idea;
- To cause this idea to penetrate technical, economic and social circles and;
- To work toward the solution of the contemporary problems of architecture.⁴⁵²

Encouraged by Giedion and supported by the “Archie Rev”, the critic and writer Shand created MARS as an English variant of CIAM with Wells Coates as the chair and F.R.S. Yorke as secretary. Shand’s professional colleague at the *AR*, John Betjeman, also became an early member. By 1936, there were 58 members including Maxwell Fry, Amyas Connell, Basil Ward, Berthold Lubetkin, László Moholy-Nagy, Misha Black, Godfrey Samuel, John Gloag, David Pleydell-Bouverie and H. de Cronin Hastings, editor of *The Architectural Review*.

MARS favoured the formation of study groups, formed within the organization to investigate particular problems such as town planning or public housing. This was a high-minded strategy later imported by the Victorian variant of MARS, the Architectural Research Group (ARG) where Arthur Baldwinson briefly held membership in the 1940s.

The British MARS group also hosted two exhibitions illustrating the principles and ideals of modern architecture and design in 1934. Holman’s 1981 study reports that Baldwinson played a role in a MARS exhibition in the New Burlington Galleries in London in 1936 as an employee of Gropius and Fry.⁴⁵³ The Baldwinson papers do not support this exhibition design role.⁴⁵⁴

The only potential MARS-related work recorded in Baldwinson’s papers is some 1935 design work for Raymond McGrath on the *Daily Mail*’s “Ideal Homes” annual exposition. “Ideal Homes” would have brought him into contact with Morton Herman, the Sydney University architecture graduate who arrived in Britain on scholarships from the NSW Board of Architects and Australian Shipping Lines (known as the “Steamship Scholarship”). The “Ideal Homes” concept had earlier appeared in Sydney in 1915 and Adelaide in 1917.

⁴⁵² Laura Cohn. *ibid.*, pps.41-41.

⁴⁵³ “Mars group Exhibition.” Introduction by Le Corbusier. *Architectural Review*, vol, LXXXIII, March 1938, pps.109-116.

⁴⁵⁴ Holman, *op cit.*, p.50.

Herman worked on the *Daily Mail's* "Ideal Homes" 1935 exhibition with the British architect Robert Atkinson who played a major role in architectural education at the Architectural Association (AA), London.⁴⁵⁵ Herman later became a major figure in the formation of Sydney's Modern Architecture Research Society (MARS).

MARS IN SYDNEY

Although the full records supporting the creation of Modern Architecture Research Society (MARS) in Australia have not been assembled to date, the MARS organization was originally formed in Sydney in March 1938.⁴⁵⁶ Baldwinson was a member of its Provisional Committee. The organising committee included the architect (and later historian) Morton Herman as chair, Walter Bunning as secretary and Kenneth Goble, Eric Andrew and Arthur Baldwinson as extraordinary members.⁴⁵⁷ Baldwinson (UK 1935-1937), Goble (UK 1935-38), Herman (UK 1930-36) and Bunning (UK 1937-1938) had been resident in Britain when Wells Coates, P. Morton Shand and Maxwell Fry founded the MARS group there.⁴⁵⁸

The Sydney MARS group mission was "The furtherance of the Modern Movement in Architecture and the Allied Arts. [...] Amongst our efforts are lectures, articles, radio talks, exhibitions and hypothetical designs. We feel that these modest achievements will have justified our formation if they have created even the slightest public interest in our ideals and helped to bring the Profession back to its rightful position amongst the leaders of contemporary thought and public affairs."⁴⁵⁹ The programme paralleled the innovations of Britain's "Good Design" movement of the 1930s.

The three aims of the Sydney MARS were to:

- Study the aesthetic, structural and sociological problems of the community;
- Coordinate the ideas and activities to formulate means of solving these problems;
- Present solutions to such problems in a concrete and visible form.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁵ J.M. Freeland. "Morton Herman. An Appreciation." *Architecture in Australia*. February 1967, pps.77-79. Atkinson was initially Headmaster, later Director of Education at the AA from 1913-29. In Britain, Morton Herman also worked for Goodhart-Rendell, an early British modernist who later became known as an architectural historian. (H.S. Goodhart-Rendell, *English Architecture since the Regency*, Constable, 1953. J.M. Freeland. *ibid.*, pps.77-79.

⁴⁵⁶ The sporadic publication of MARS Australia, *Angle*, No. 4, 1940 notes "Mars formed two years ago, last month." *Angle*. 4:1940, unpaginated. Baldwinson papers MLMSS 1993, Correspondence, general file. 1938-1941, Box Y4403.

⁴⁵⁷ Recommendation of Provisional Committee to the Architectural Group (MARS), n.d. [1938?] Baldwinson Papers, Correspondence, general file. 1938-1941, MLMSS 1993, Box Y4403.

⁴⁵⁸ MARS Britain descended directly from CIAM (Les Congres internationaux de l'architecture moderne) dominated by Le Corbusier and Siegfried Giedion. Maxwell Fry's memoir describes MARS' first organisational meeting with Wells Coates, Fry and Morton Shand. *Autobiographical Sketches*. Elek, 1975, p.140.

⁴⁵⁹ *Angle*. 5:1941. Baldwinson Papers, MLMSS 1993, Further Papers, Box 4/5. See also Holman, *op. cit.*, p.89-90.

⁴⁶⁰ Richard Apperly. "MARS." *Sydney Houses 1914-1939*. Master of Architecture Thesis, UNSW, 1972. Vol. 2, p.245. pps.242-244. Apperly draws exclusively on the papers of former MARS member, G.H.B. McDonell for his MARS research.

It can be readily seen that the introduction of the concept of using the social sciences to shape the form and function of architecture in Australia is one of MARS' major contributions to the architectural debate. The statement of sociological principles is closely aligned to the English manifesto.⁴⁶¹

TO THE YOUNGER ARCHITECT⁴⁶²

With a view to enlisting the interest of the younger man of the Profession in the position of the Architect in the community, and to enable him to make social contact with his fellow Architects,

A DINNER,

followed by a discussion on this and allied subjects will be held at the Horseshoe Café, Hoskins Place, City on Friday, 3rd March.

The sponsors of this movement believe that such as body as M.A.R.S. in London can be a valuable adjunct to the bodies existing for the advancement of Architecture in this country, and desire to obtain the view of those who can attend.

Dinner 3/

Figure 6-1. *Verbatim* facsimile of the invitation to the “Younger Architect” from the MARS organising committee. Undated. MARS papers, collection of G.H.B. McDonell.

The group soon included architects such as Hirst, Osmond Jarvis, Harry Mack, Hardy Morphett, Gerard R. B. McDonell, Tom O'Mahony, Eric Thompson, Frank Turner⁴⁶³ and in 1939, Jimmy James (R. Haughton James).^{464 465} According to Hirst, “...the profession needed a shake-up... to take part in the new and exciting developments that had been taking place in Europe.”⁴⁶⁶ In Sydney, the emphasis was on youth and the “Younger Architect”.

⁴⁶¹ Desbrowe-Annear's T-Square Club in Melbourne, like all reform movements, began with a similar manifesto including plans for a publication, *The Square Book*, which seems to have not reached the press. Caroline Miley. *The Arts Among the Handicrafts. The Arts and Crafts Movement in Victoria*. St Lawrence Press, 2001, pps.87-90.

⁴⁶² MARS papers, collection of G.H.B. McDonell, reproduced in R. E. Apperly. *Sydney Houses 1914-1939*. Master of Architecture Thesis, UNSW, 1972. Vol. 2, p.245.

⁴⁶³ Holman, op. cit, p.89.

⁴⁶⁴ Jimmy James, MARS subscription, 8 June 1939. Baldwinson papers MLMSS 1993, Correspondence, general file. 1938-1941, BOX Y4403.

⁴⁶⁵ A listing of all known members of MARS, Sydney is included in the Appendix.

⁴⁶⁶ Holman, op. cit, p.89.

MARS & THE NSW ROYAL AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

J.M. Freeland, the historian of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA), has affirmed that MARS members “...raised a deal of apprehension amongst the establishment of the NSW Institute of Architects (later RAIA).” He explains that MARS “in 1940 ... ran a ticket for the NSW Chapter elections and obtained all the seats available to Associates.” [...] The group was accused of wanting to capture the Chapter and even the RAIA Council...”⁴⁶⁷ Alfred Hook, a major figure in the RAIA, was one of the MARS group’s chief antagonists. Hook had been elected the first president of the RAIA in 1929 and was fiercely protective of the federal organisation.



Figure 6-2. Subversives. John Oldham (left) Reproduced from *Heritage*, 1962. Arthur Baldwinson, 1938. *Australian Home Beautiful*, 1 August 1938.

According to Freeland, Hook denounced the collective MARS group as “subversive and destructive”.⁴⁶⁸ One of Hook’s principal targets was probably the MARS president, Walter Bunning, an executive officer in the Commonwealth Housing Commission during wartime. RAIA President Hook had offered the services of the RAIA to the Commonwealth during the 1939-45 War, but according to Freeland, Hook’s offers were rebuffed by a “small group of

⁴⁶⁷ J.M. Freeland. *The Making of a Profession*. Angus and Robertson with the RAIA, 1971, pps.173-174.

⁴⁶⁸ A recent study by Judith O’Callaghan explores this struggle in detail. Judith O’Callaghan. “Project Housing and the Architectural Profession in Sydney in the 1960s.” PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 2007.

[un-named] architects” that in all likelihood included Bunning.⁴⁶⁹ Bunning later wrote the 1944 Commonwealth Housing Commission’s report on Australian housing.

MARS affairs also began to play a small role within the Stephenson & Turner offices. Baldwinson had transferred to their Sydney office in August of the same year where John Oldham was practising.⁴⁷⁰ They formed a brief Oldham & Baldwinson partnership in 1938 for a unique venture called the “South Coast Housing Project”. Widespread unemployment in New South Wales meant that workers were drawn to the South Coast by the rapid pre-war expansion of the BHP Steelworks and the Port Kembla Copper smelter. A housing crisis soon appeared.

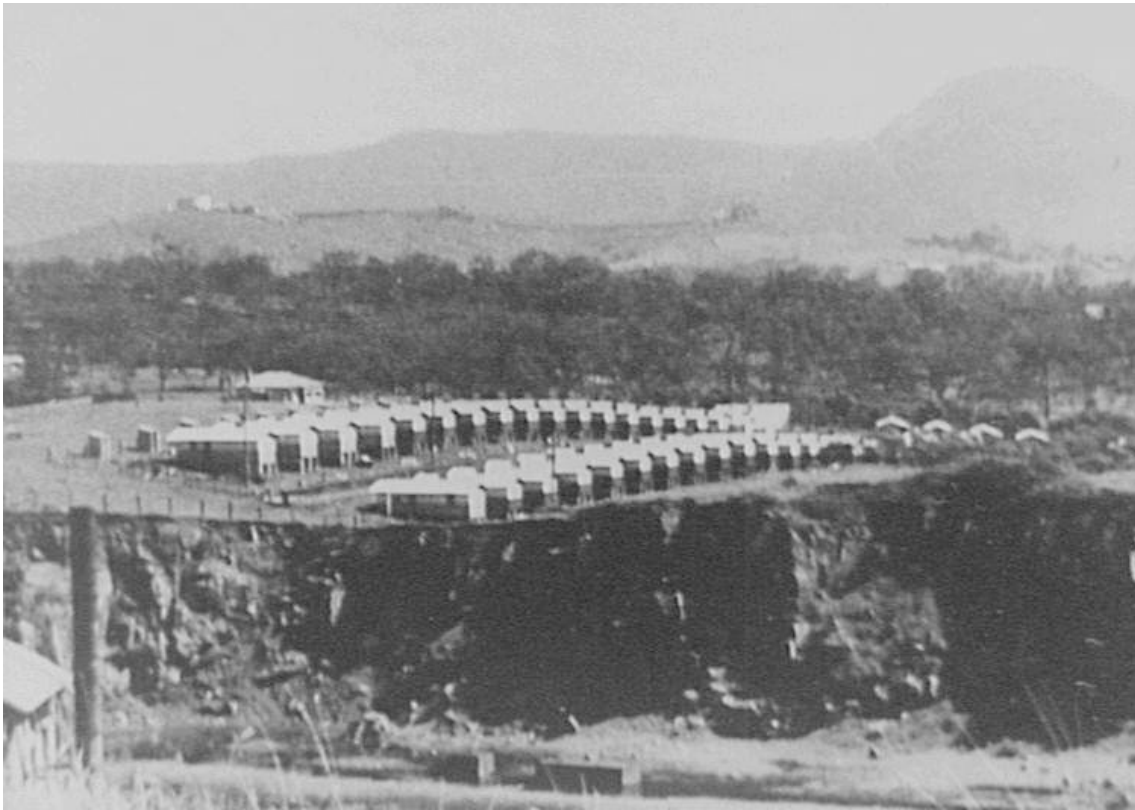


Figure 6-3. Port Kembla Quarry (foreground) with one of the NSW Government-sponsored Temporary Housing settlements (“Spoonervilles”) in place. ca.1938. Wollongong Regional Library. No. PO 10333.

The local council was completely unprepared for this sudden increase in population; tent camps were soon erected with widespread illegal squatting on Crown Land. There was widespread discontent and some fear of violence. To address the housing shortage, the NSW Government quickly built two tent cities in the district that rapidly became known as

⁴⁶⁹ Julian Goddard. "John Oldham, Architect and Designer." *Aspects of Perth Modernism. 1929-1942*. (D. Bromfield, ed.) Centre for Fine Arts. University of Western Australia. 1986. Oldham had attended at the University of Melbourne’s Architecture Atelier (1929-30) while Baldwinson was at The Gordon.

⁴⁷⁰ *ibid.*

“Spoonervilles” named after the unpopular Minister for Local Government Eric Spooner. This political setting suggests that the workers’ housing issue was a particularly attractive project for the Communist Party of Australia member John Oldham.

Their proposal was to design a range of affordable timber houses (£200 – £320) to meet the desperate need for housing in the Wollongong/Port Kembla area. The houses conceptualised by Oldham & Baldwinson were somewhat conventional by the standards of the 1930s but they featured flexible plans that allowed “the cottage to grow with the family”.

The records and the Baldwinson papers suggest that there were no more than three residential design schemes developed for the South Coast Housing Committee. All of the houses were gable-roofed designs but all of them used the modernist convention of strip windows (with timber sashes and casements) and weatherboard cladding. Their forms were at times exceptional, for example, the Scheme 2 House below with its horizontal timber string-coursing that forms part of the porch and continues across the front elevation acting as a solar control element above the casement windows. The optimistic intent to provide for planned extensions to the original structures is uncharacteristic of the era.

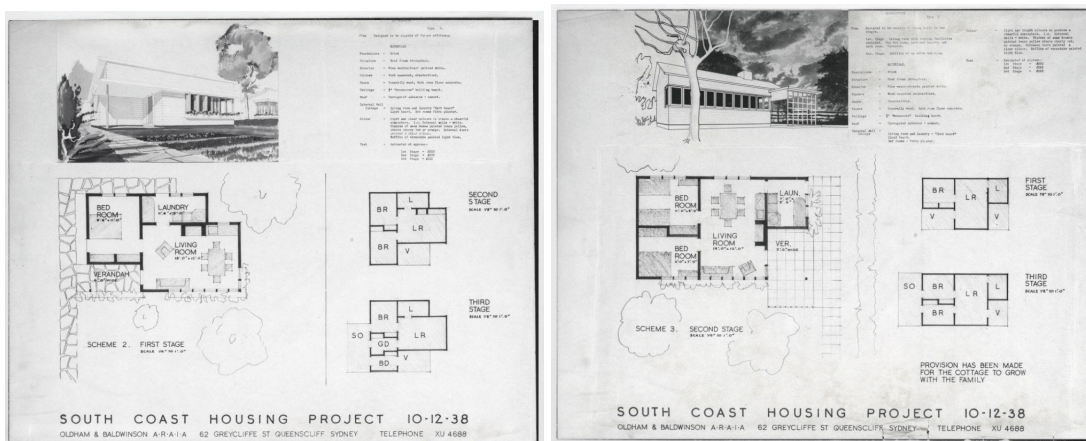


Figure 6-4. Oldham & Baldwinson. South Coast Housing Projects, Scheme 2 and 3, 10 December 1938. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, PXE 77-1.

MARS AND MASS HOUSING

Oldham & Baldwinson's first report to the Port Kembla Committee appears in August 1939.⁴⁷¹ The two designers had proposed a subdivision of Council-owned land around the Coomaditchy Lagoon area that would create 230 houses (Subdivision Design C) or 124 houses (Subdivision Design D).⁴⁷² Three low cost "type form" cottages (Schemes 1, 2, 3) with "open plan" (living and dining integrated) interiors and modular extensions were developed for the subdivision.⁴⁷³ The modular concept for the design allowed for simple additions for the rear and side elevations. The Illawarra District Housing Committee was enthusiastic about the project and New South Wales government funds for the subdivision were sought from the much-ridiculed Minister for Local Government, Eric Spooner.⁴⁷⁴

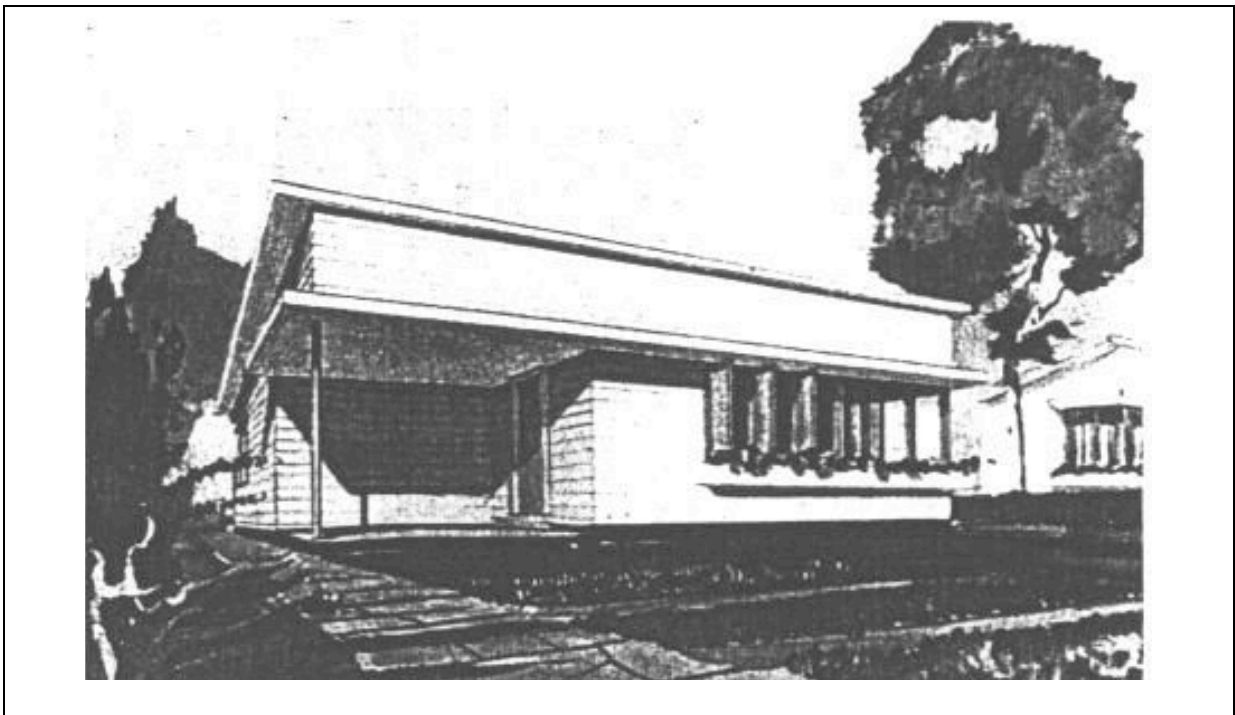


Figure 6-5. Oldham & Baldwinson. Perspective for Scheme 2 £300 House for South Coast Housing Committee. *Australia National Journal*, 1: January 1939.

⁴⁷¹ Oldham travels to New York in late 1939 and does not return to Australia until early 1940. Upon their return, he and Rae McClintock return to Western Australia. Goddard, op. cit., pps.40-41.

⁴⁷² Oldham & Baldwinson. "South Coast Housing Project. Coomaditchy Lagoon, Port Kembla." 4 August 1939. Baldwinson Papers, MLMSS 1993, Box 4406.

⁴⁷³ Baldwinson papers. PXE 778, v.5 items 23-26. "South Coast Housing. Coomaditchy Lagoon, Port Kembla, 1939." ff. 2296-2305.

⁴⁷⁴ Minister Eric Spooner's government-sponsored tent city for the Port Kembla workers had been consistently ridiculed in the regional press as "Spoonerville". The 10 March 1939 *South Coast Daily News* featured a scathing article, "Houses that Spooner Built" that features photos of "Spoonerville" homes. "2 room house with fireplace for family, rent £10/wk. "Mr Spooner has spend £25,000 on this travesty."

But in August 1939, soon after the proposal had been endorsed with a fanfare of local publicity and representations made to the New South Wales government, Oldham suddenly decided to accompany the Stephenson & Turner World's Fair exhibition to New York City. Oldham explains his decision in his unpublished memoirs.⁴⁷⁵

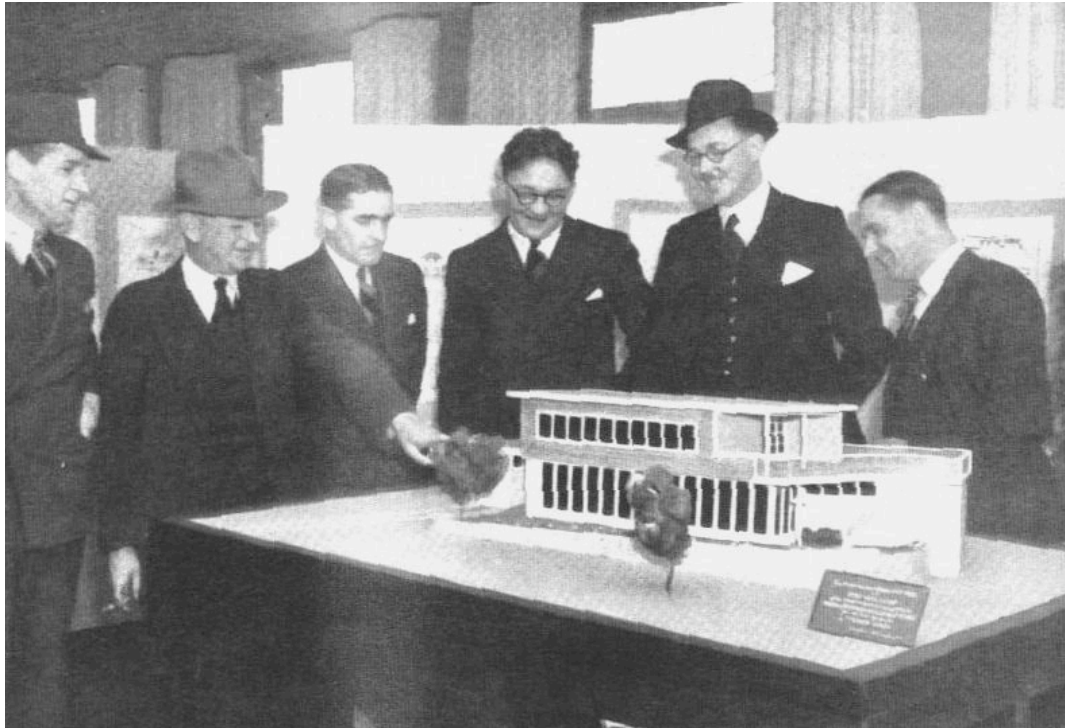


Figure 6-6. The opening of the 1939 “Better Homes Exhibition” organised by the Timber Development Association and MARS at David Jones Department Store, Sydney. The President of MARS, Walter Bunning is second from right along with Kenneth Goble, MARS member far right.⁴⁷⁶ They are admiring a model of Arthur Baldwinson’s £2000 House from the 1938 TDA Competition.

I had just recently refused an offer by Stephenson & Turner to send me to New York to supervise the erection of the Australian Pavilion at the Fair, on the grounds of the importance of my Party commitments. We began to deeply regret our refusal; Ray [his spouse] tried hard to change my mind. When she showed me how strongly she felt about it by bursting into tears I agreed to consult [CPA organiser] “Dicky” Dixon about it. Dixon advised me to grab the opportunity so I went to Geoff Molme at Stephenson & Turner who had made me the offer and told him I had changed my mind. It was too late. [...] [He] said they could help towards the fares if I still wanted to go and that there would be a job for me when I came back. I decided to try to borrow three hundred pounds from my mother which

⁴⁷⁵ John Oldham. “Unpublished Autobiography.” (No date.) Oldham material courtesy of Trish Oldham, p. 74. Accessed 5 April 2005.

⁴⁷⁶ “Economy and Grace. The 1939 Better Homes Exhibition and the Use of Timber in Architecture.” *Art in Australia*. 15 August 1939, pps.79-83.

*we felt with strict economy would finance the trip. Mother came to the party and we were away.*⁴⁷⁷

There seemed to be no ill will regarding Oldham's sudden departure and Baldwinson provided him with a written introduction to Walter Gropius, now at Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts. But his decision had left the Oldham & Baldwinson partnership with major responsibilities for the Port Kembla project.

The Sydney MARS group, perhaps encouraged by Bunning, came to Baldwinson's rescue with a series of housing designs for the South Coast Housing Project. The designs featured in a MARS section at the David Jones Art Gallery's "Better Homes" exhibition sponsored by the TDA and the NSW Forestry Commission in July 1939.⁴⁷⁸ These designs were later published in the *Australian Timber Journal* (ATJ) throughout 1940.

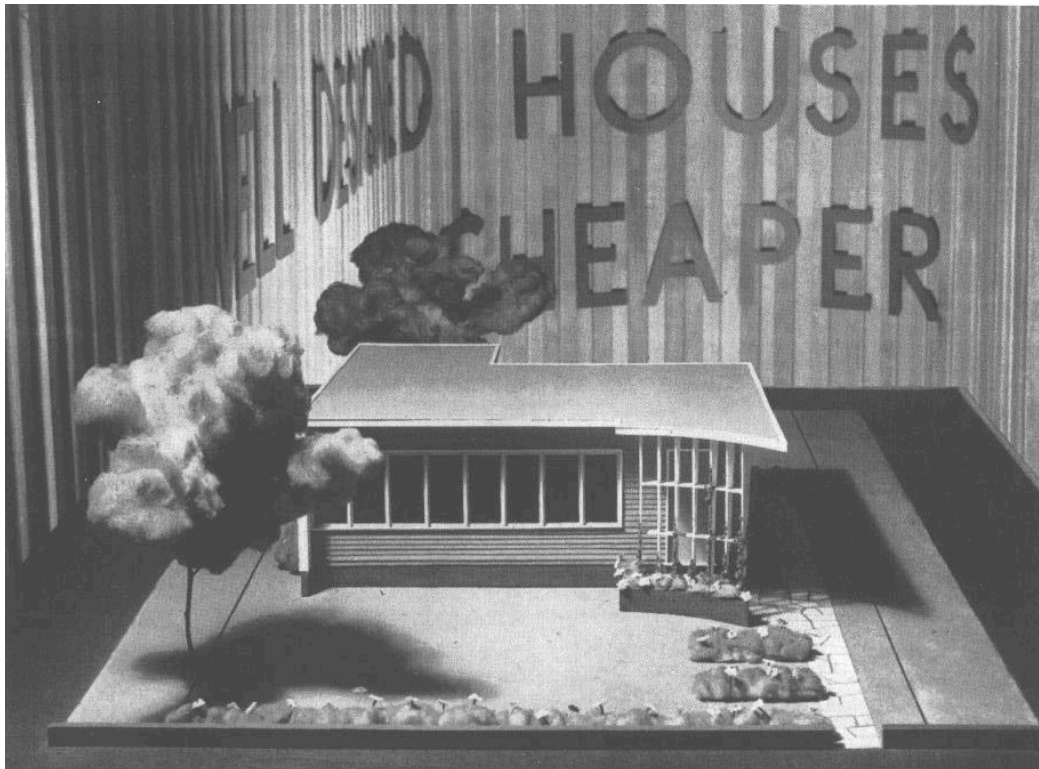


Figure 6-7. An image from the MARS exhibition stating, "Well Designed Houses are Cheaper". 1939. The model is Arthur Baldwinson's TDA Competition winning £500 House. *Art in Australia*. 15 August 1939, pps.79-83.

The Better Homes Exhibition, arranged by the Forestry Commission of NSW, under the Auspices of the Timber Development Association of Australia (NSW Branch) opened on 4 July 1939. This exhibition (the third in a series begun in 1937) comprises: [...] models and

⁴⁷⁷ John Oldham, op. cit., p.74.

⁴⁷⁸ "Better Homes Exhibition." *Art in Australia*. 15 August 1939, pps.79-83.

drawings of the prize-winning designs in the Australian Homes from Australian Forests Competition and the Timber Homes Competition recently conducted by the Timber Development Association of Victoria.

David Jones Ltd have again this year placed at the disposal of the Forestry Commission, their George Street store for the exhibition and the official opening was presided over by their Chairman of Directors, Charles Lloyd Jones, who when introducing the Hon. R. S. Vincent, said that the public of NSW should appreciate the value they had in their wonderful forests and should take care of them.

*Timber house designs by the Modern Architectural Research Society [MARS], together with photographs of timber houses from overseas are also shown.*⁴⁷⁹

The 1939 “Better Homes Exhibition”, included at least two models of the Baldwinson TDA winning houses. It also featured for the first time, new work by a group of young Sydney architects (including Baldwinson) exhibiting under the MARS banner. A selection of the ten MARS houses designed for Port Kembla is shown below.

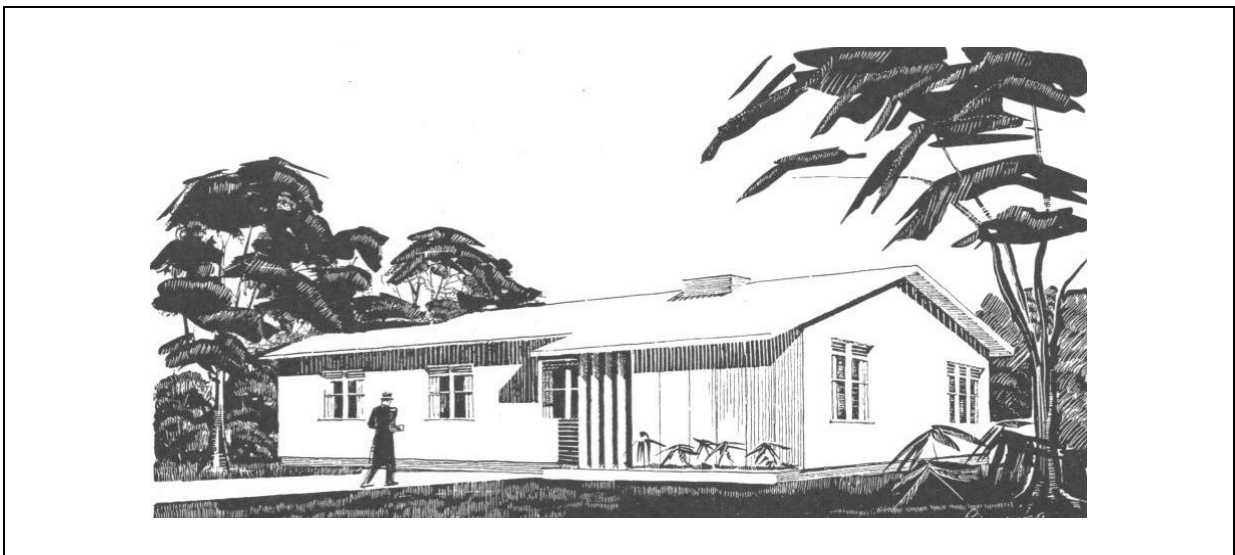


Figure 6-8. Walter Bunning, MARS House, 1939. *Australian Timber Journal*. February/March 1940, p.25.

⁴⁷⁹ *ibid.*

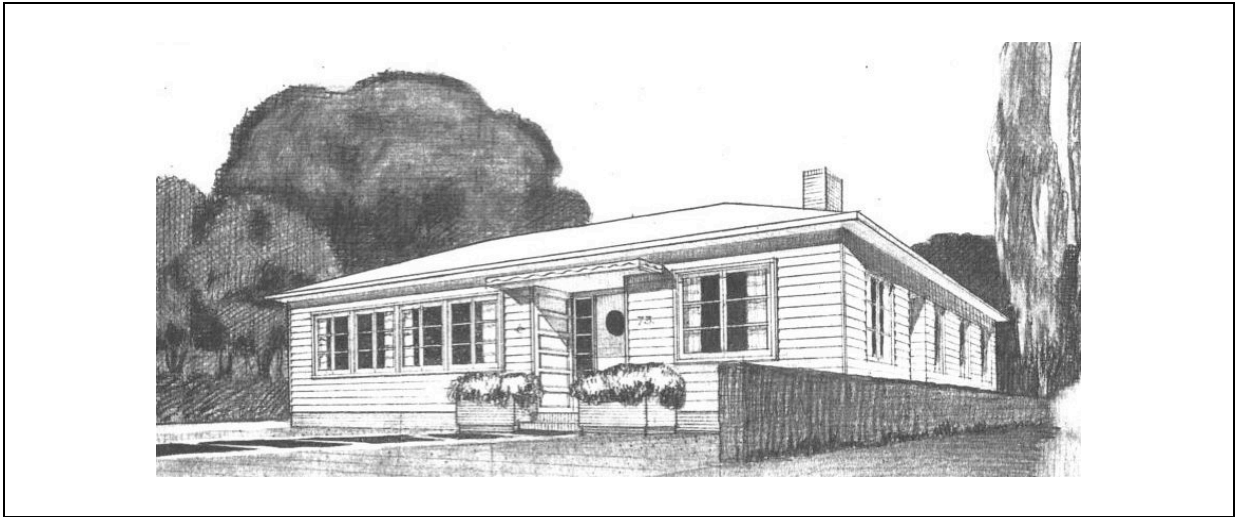


Figure 6-9. Morton Herman. MARS House, 1939. *Australian Timber Journal* February/March 1940, p.89.

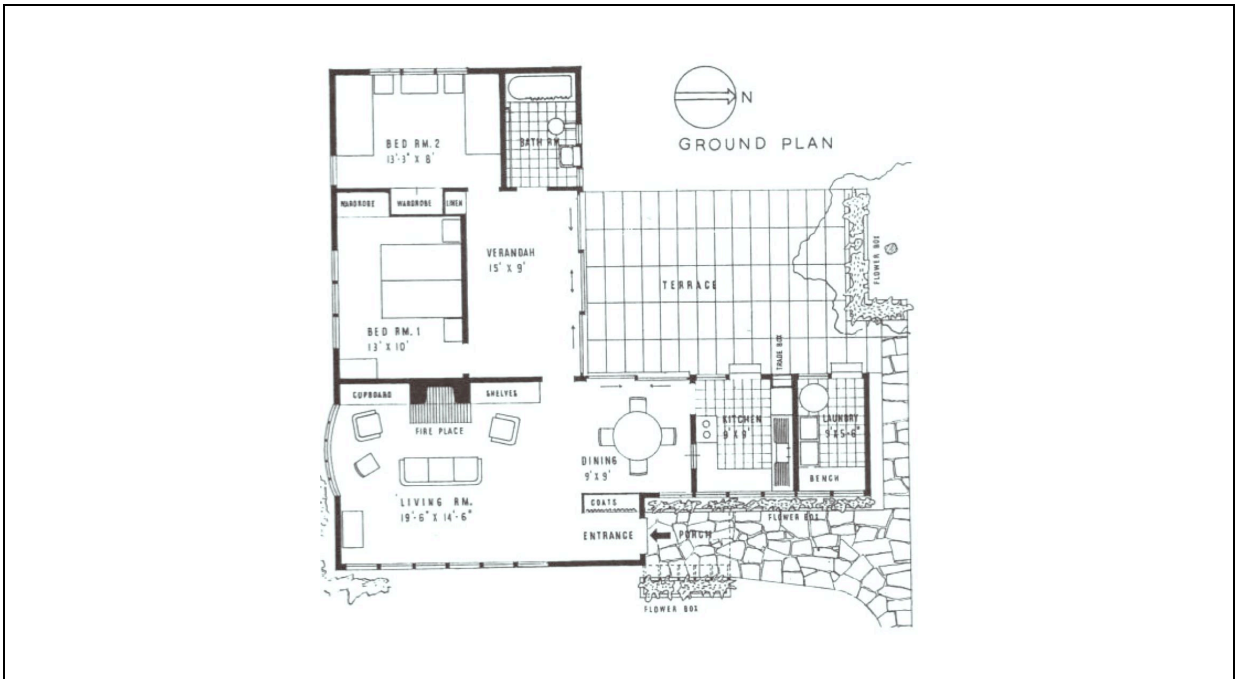


Figure 6-10. Arthur Baldwinson. MARS House, 1939. L-shaped floor plan. *Australian Timber Journal*. March/April 1940, p.159.

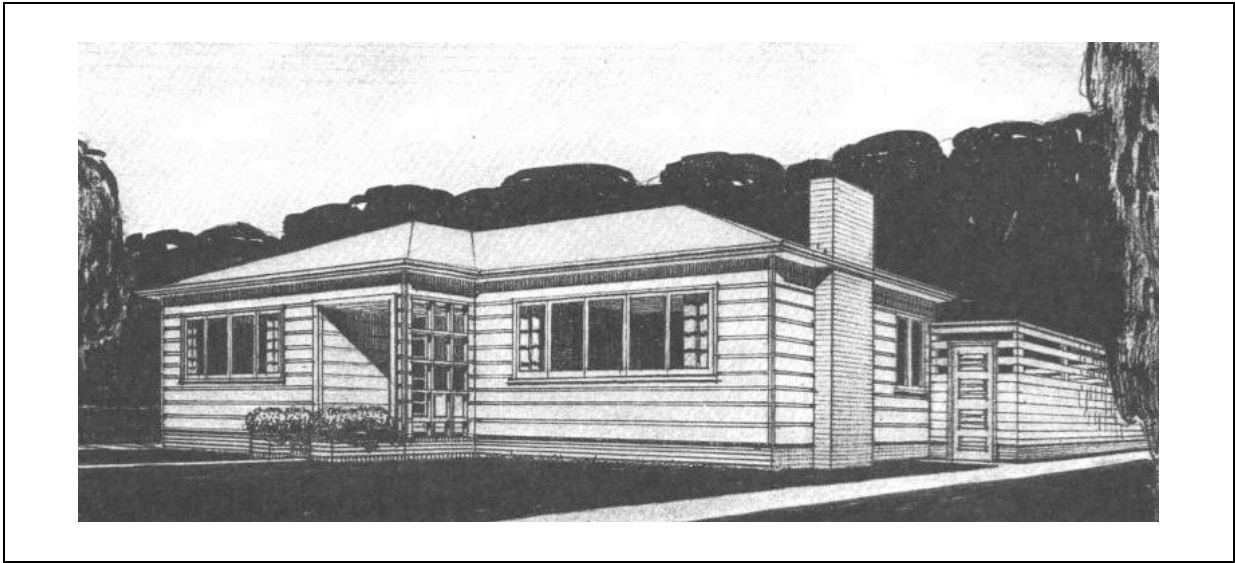


Figure 6-11. MARS Group Collaborative Design, 1939. *Australian Timber Journal*, May/June 1940. p.291.

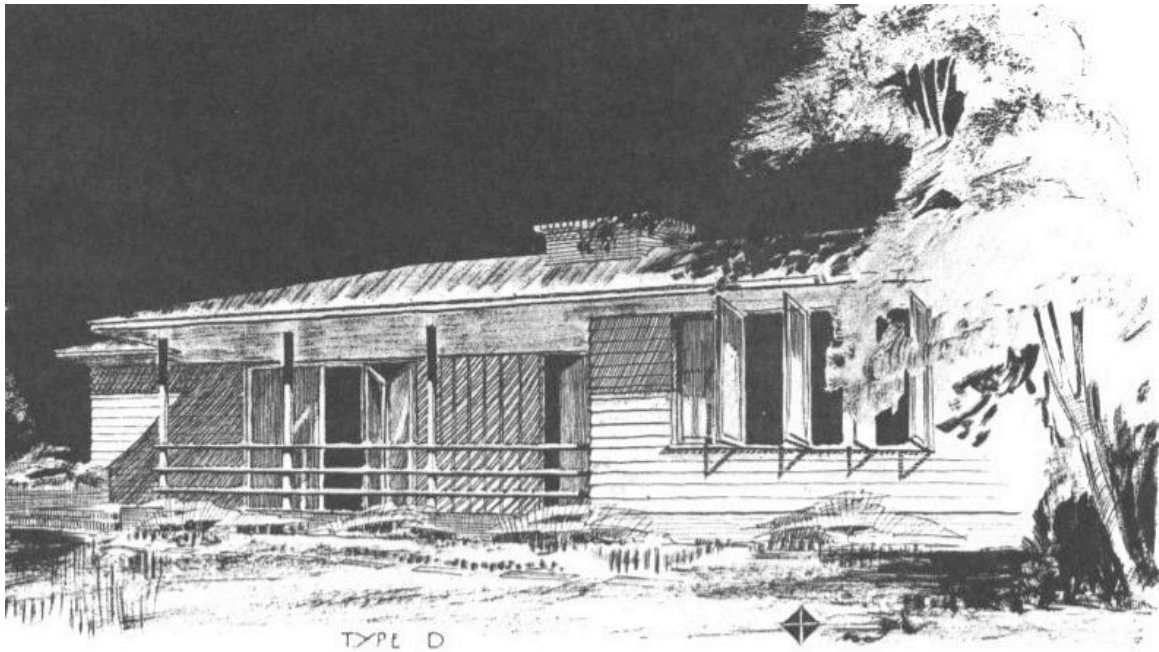


Figure 6-12. MARS Group Collaborative Design, 1939. *Australian Timber Journal*, June/July 1940, p. 361.



Figure 6-13. Arthur Baldwinson. MARS House, 1939. *Australian Timber Journal*, September/October 1940, p. 539.

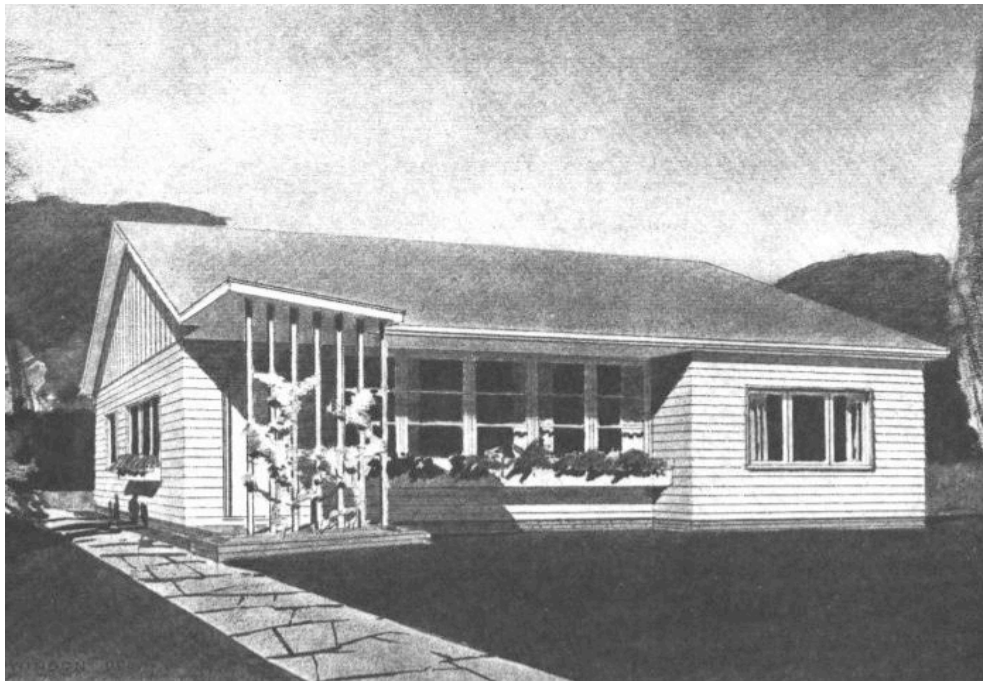


Figure 6-14. Arthur Baldwinson. MARS House, 1939. *Australian Timber Journal*, July/August 1940, p.425.



Figure 6-15. Conventional new construction in the Robertson Road subdivision, Port Kembla, 1938. Illawarra Images. Woollongong Library, No. PO6069.

These selections from the MARS-designed houses are horizontally aligned timber-clad (supported by the Timber Design Association) single-storey gable or hipped-roof structures that vary from the traditional floor plans of the era to open plan interiors. Many of the houses embrace some of the contemporary conventions such as hipped roofs, L-plan frontages and grouped sash windows that would make them acceptable to the Port Kembla housing market. On the other hand, some of the MARS interiors provide a modernist range of open floor plan experiments embracing generous fireplaces or exterior sun terraces.

The departure of Oldham for New York and the beginning of the 1939-45 War, however, spelled an end to the Oldham & Baldwinson programme as well as the Wollongong MARS project. On an inspection of the suburb, no MARS houses could be immediately identified in the post-war subdivision of the Coomaditchy Lagoon area of Port Kembla.

MARS PUBLICATIONS

The principal outlet for the Sydney MARS programme was the erratic Roneo'd folded pamphlet *Angle* published from Room 46, 54a Pitt Street, Sydney. *Angle* reports that MARS meetings were held at the Horseshoe Café, Hosking Place in Sydney. Hosking Place remains off Castlereagh Street but the Horseshoe Café is no more.

While *Angle* was intended to be a monthly, in reality an annual appearance was more common. The first issues of *Angle* in 1940 were under the editorial supervision of Bunning

and Herman. The content and design of the pamphlet was as erratic as its publication dates. It featured architectural commentary, a bit of gossip and reviews of new Australian architecture. New work was rated by assigning degrees of an angle with 90 degrees (right angle) the highest score.⁴⁸⁰

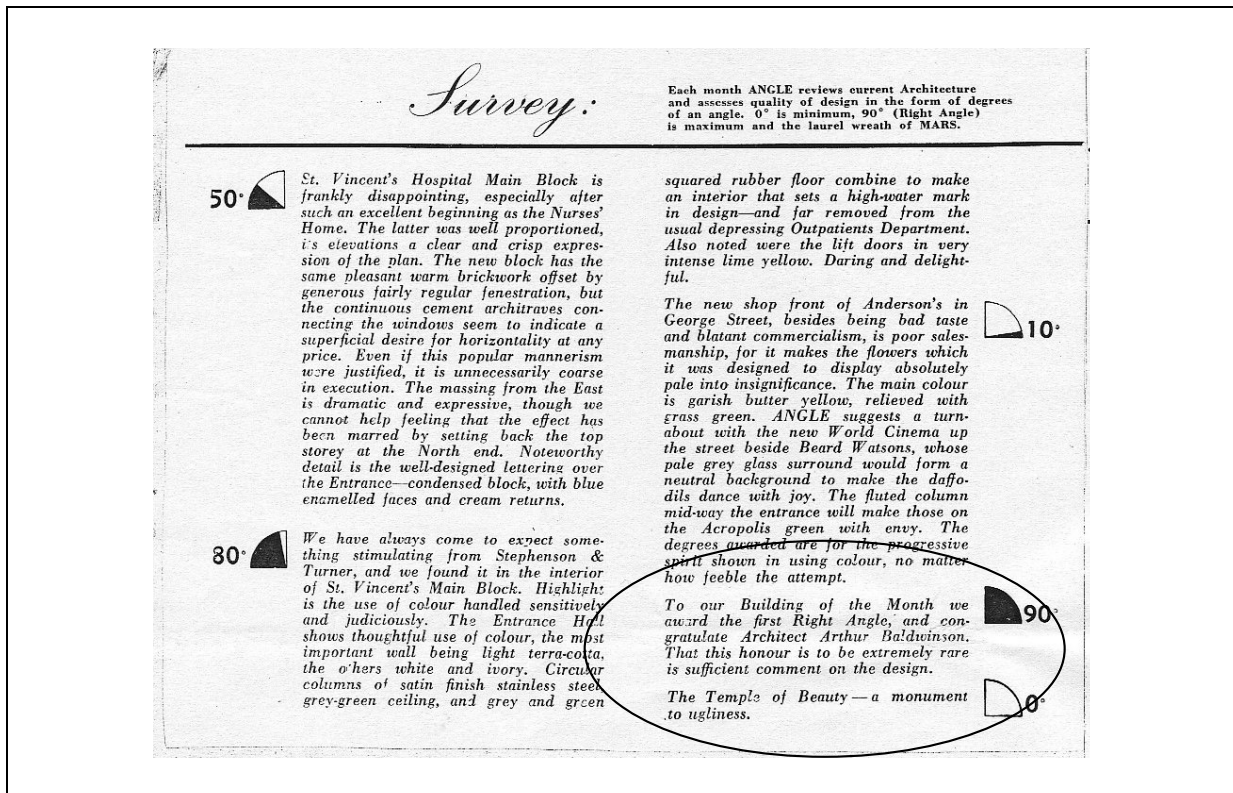


Figure 6-16. Cutting from *Angle*, no.8, the sporadic newsletter of MARS, 1940 issue featuring the award of a 90-degree angle to Baldwinson's Kingsford-Smith House of 1939. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993.

During 1940, a feature review appeared of Baldwinson's Taylor's Point, Pittwater house for Kingsford-Smith. *Angle* awarded the Kingsford-Smith house a 90-degree angle. The plan is also reproduced.⁴⁸¹ The following issue includes a review of Stephenson & Turner's King George V Hospital.⁴⁸² Two issues later, there was a review of Stephenson & Turner's ACI Building, William Street and discussion of office furniture designed for the building, including the director's suite featuring the boardroom in leather upholstery and rust-coloured carpet.⁴⁸³ *Angle*'s tone is brash, irreverent and full of earnest good humour.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸⁰ Although coincidental, *Angle* and its rating system have some thematic connections with Desbrowe-Anneer's early 20th century T-Square Club's proposed publication, *The Square Book*. Caroline Miley. *The Arts Among the Handicrafts. The Arts and Crafts Movement in Victoria*. pps.87-90.

⁴⁸¹ *Angle*. 5: March 1940. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993⁴⁸¹

⁴⁸² *Angle*. 8: no date (1940). Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993.

⁴⁸³ *Angle*. 6: April 1940. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993. No images of this furniture has been located,

As the war progressed into the increasingly lean years of 1941-42, *Angle*'s publication dates began to slip. In a 1941 letter to Baldwinson, Bunning writes from Melbourne's Victoria Palace, Little Collins Street, of Melbourne's "Architectural Research Group" (ARG). "Oscar Baye [?] is President, other members include Roy Simpson, Roy Grounds, Molly Shaw, Robin Penleigh Boyd, Trevor Bain and a couple of others. They [seem] to have the same difficulties as we have [with MARS]. Nobody will do any work."⁴⁸⁵ During 1941-42, *Angle* struggles to produce issues 9, 10 and 11. The last issue of this period reports the wartime activities of MARS members, observing that 27 percent are directly engaged in defence camouflage activities.

With the retirement of Bunning from the presidency in July of 1943, the absence of Baldwinson in war work with the Beaufort Division of the Commonwealth Aircraft Factory and the election of John Oldham as new president, MARS becomes increasingly political.⁴⁸⁶ In *Angle* no. 13 [ca.1943], there is considerable discussion of post-war issues. The feature essay opens with the topic, "Should Land be Nationalised?" The increasing political tone of *Angle* from 1943 to 1945 reflected the platform of the wartime government, the Australian Labor Party, as well as the interests of the new MARS president, John Oldham, an active Communist Party of Australia (CPA) member.

Oldham had just returned from the 1939 New York World's Fair with Ray, a journalist and fellow CPA member, when war was declared. Ray was expecting their first child and they went directly to their families in Western Australia for the birth.⁴⁸⁷ They returned to Sydney in the early 1940s where Oldham took up his former position with Stephenson & Turner.

Oldham provides some insight into MARS activities in his unpublished autobiography.

We called ourselves the Modern Architectural Research Society [...] and met regularly for luncheons at which a member on a selected subject would give a talk.⁴⁸⁸ We produced a contemporary pocket sized monthly brochure "Angle" to criticise bad buildings, and compliment good ones and campaign to improve the RAIA [...] and [...] Architectural Education...

⁴⁸⁴ There are many analogies between *Angle* and the publications of the Victorian Architectural Students such as *Smudges*, 1939-47. *Smudges* and *Angle* folded into pocket-sized issues, *Smudges* awarded bouquets and blots to new work and both publications assumed the era's "parlour socialism" editorial stance.

⁴⁸⁵ Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792, Personal Correspondence file, 1940-1943.

⁴⁸⁶ Baldwinson was invited to join the Melbourne Architecture Research Group (ARG) in October 1942. Baldwinson was the Honorary Secretary of ARG's Town Planning Study Circle (their term). His role was minimal and he resigned in May 1945 citing the pressures of work. Baldwinson papers MLMSS 1993, ARG File. Box 4402.

⁴⁸⁷ John Oldham (1907-1999). Unpublished Autobiography. (No date.) Courtesy of Trish Oldham. Access 5 April 2005, p.92.

⁴⁸⁸ John Fisher [training at Ruskin and Rowe during the MARS period] observed in an undated interview that "I was too young [for MARS membership] but I did go down to Langridges Gymnasium opposite Wynward [where] I was trying to get my chest expansion up enough to go into the navy and they [MARS members] were trying to get their waistlines down after too much drinking. These were the MARS people..." RAIA NSW interview transcript files, vol.3, p.31.

*The controversial somewhat aggressive material in [Angle] caused a considerable stir in the profession and gradually began to produce results. I also became close friends with Chris Van Dyke, Hal Salvage and a talented contemporary architect called Walter Bunning and enjoyed the interchange with all the brightest of the young Sydney Architects, many of whom were left of centre in their politics.*⁴⁸⁹

Many of the MARS members were individually involved in war work and collectively, they offered a proposal for the design and construction of the so-called “Duration Home”, a prefabricated temporary structure providing rudimentary housing for defense industries. Nora Cooper, journalist and active supporter of Australian modernist architecture, wrote about the MARS design in 1943.⁴⁹⁰

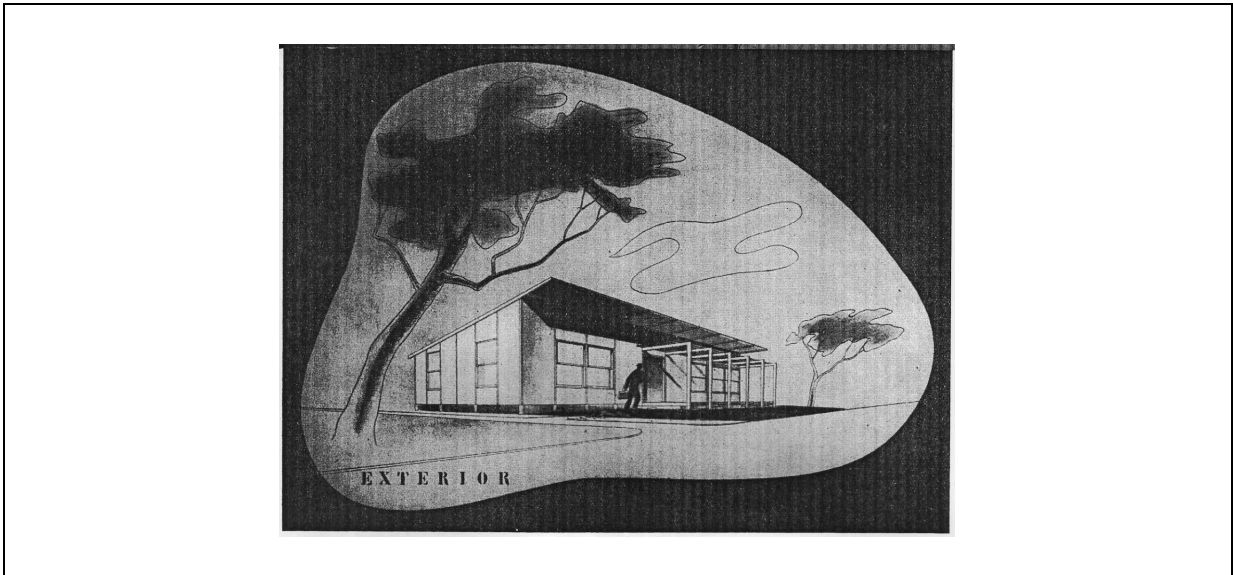


Figure 6-17. MARS. Perspective of the Duration Home, 1943. Nora Cooper. “Some Sydney Architects on Post-War Planning.” *Australian Home Beautiful*. March 1943, pps.5-7.

To all inquiries on the subject of post-war planning, Sydney has, at the moment, one answer, MARS. This is the Modern Architecture Research Society, a group of 50 [sic] progressive architects, which was founded in 1939 for the purpose of research into current architectural problems. Prominent among them are such well-known men as John D. Moore and Walter Bunning, while B.J. Waterhouse, although not a member, has shown a great deal of sympathy with their aims. He it was who arranged for the Society’s model munitions worker’s cottage to be shown at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition, where it was viewed by large numbers of interested persons.

⁴⁸⁹ John Oldham (1907-1999). Unpublished Autobiography. (No date.) Courtesy of Trish Oldham. Access 5 April 2005, p.76.

⁴⁹⁰ Nora Cooper. “Some Sydney Architects on Post-War Planning.” [The Duration Home]. *Australian Home Beautiful* March 1943, pps.5-7.

[I]t has got round to the problem of “duration” houses for munitions and other workers. They feel that because these are considered temporary, they should not be set aside in a class by themselves [...].

Criticisms of houses now being built by the Commonwealth Government in Lithgow, however, have been embodied by MARS in a practical plan of their own which they consider is superior to the Government “duration” house in important respects: (1) speed and flexibility in erection and demolition; (2) making best use of space; (3) providing the best possible aspect; (4) best possible appearance; (5) lower cost. [...]

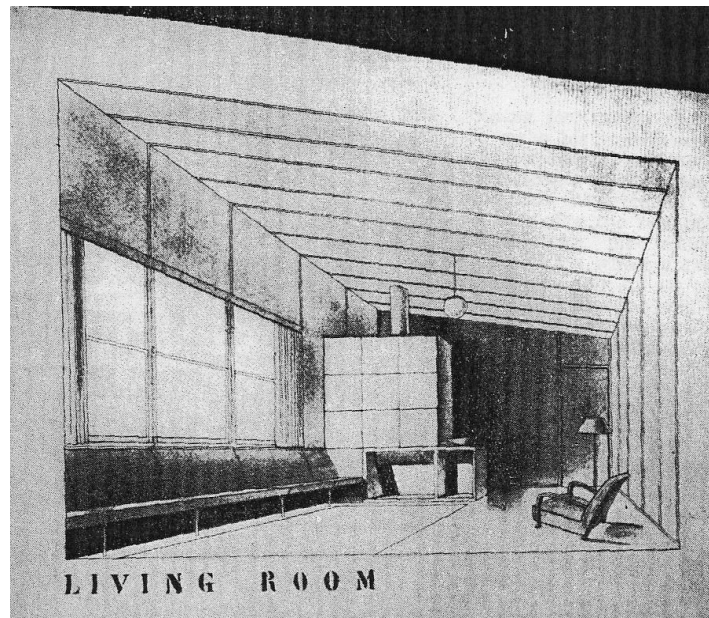


Figure 6-18. MARS. Interior perspective of the Duration Home, 1943. Nora Cooper. “Some Sydney Architects on Post-War Planning.” *Australian Home Beautiful*. March 1943, pps.5-7.

They have solved this problem by the adoption of pre-fabricated construction, which means that each house is made up of standardised units mass produced in a factory, carted on to the site and erected there by unskilled or semi-skilled labour. [...]

The adoption of 3-foot wall units makes construction rapid and easy. It also regulates the size of windows which are simply multiples of the 3-foot unit. The living room window is 6 feet x 9 feet and has a built-in seat with tubular metal supports. [...]

The fireplace, which is built out into the room serves as a screen for the front door. It is a concrete unit with a pre-cast circular flue, finished in the factory ready for putting into position on the site.

“If pre-fabricated methods are considered now, and building organisations set up to carry out the work on this specialised construction,” says MARS, “there will be in existence after the war the ready-made nucleus of an effective scheme for post-war building.” [...]

[T]his is the moment for the architect to make his voice heard in the land, clearly and authoritatively in language that the public can understand, on this vital matter of postwar building. [The architect] [...] is the expert whose pursuit of knowledge is undertaken not only for its own sake but as a contribution to human well-being. Never was that contribution more needed than now.

The crudeness of the design and presentation of this project suggests that Baldwinson, Bunning or Herman played no role in the design development of the MARS “Duration House”. While the principles of prefabrication, standardised unit construction and “built-in” furnishings were well established during the 1939-45 War, the commercial development of wartime housing did not advance until the mid-1940s. This issue is discussed in the following chapter.

Following the widely-predicted housing shortage issue in post-war Australia and Bunning’s 1945 book *Homes in the Sun. Past, Present, and Future of Australian Housing*, Oldham and the MARS group released a small MARS booklet, *The Post War Home*. It began with a foreword by Oldham with contributions by Bunning, Hal Salvage and Hedley Carr.⁴⁹¹ *The Post War Home*, like *Homes in the Sun*, champions the familiar central-planning vision of post-war communities of high density flats surrounded by parkland, the labour-saving “scientific kitchen” and the fusion of community centres and education facilities in the Impington College manner. Bunning’s *Homes in the Sun*, for example, reproduces Baldwinson’s perspective prepared for Gropius’ Impington progressive community school design.

The *Post War Home* explores the topics of prefabrication and standardisation in the utility areas of the home such as laundry, kitchen and bathroom. A major discussion also appears on the value of the flat: “Your Post War Home a Flat?” Following the social conventions of the era, Erskineville, Woolloomooloo and Redfern are described as rows of desolate dwellings. Flats can bring modern comforts, asserts the *Post War Home*, they can be suitable for children, flats could preserve the countryside and they could clear our slums at a much-reduced cost. These themes dominate modernist reformers throughout the 1940s.

⁴⁹¹ The commercial publishing house W. J. Nesbitt released Bunning’s *Homes in the Sun* in 1945. MARS members Hedley Carr and John Oldham promoted their ideas on an ABC broadcast on 19 January 1944, “After the war, what about housing?” NSW RAIA biography of Hedley Norman Carr, courtesy Anne Higham, RAIA NSW.



Figure 6-19. John Oldham, editor. *The Post-War Home*. (left). Contributions by John Oldham, Walter Bunning, Hal Salvage and Hedley Carr. MARS, 1945. Walter Bunning. *Homes in the Sun*. (right) W. J. Nesbitt, 1945.

Following the end of the war in 1945, de-mobilisation and social instability seemed to have put an end to the MARS group and their meetings at the Horseshoe Café. It is not clear when and if the organization formally disbanded. Although Oldham and Bunning maintained their interests in planning into the post-war period, their interests expanded into other areas, most notably for Oldham into landscape architecture and historic preservation.

With the organisation's history circumscribed by the 1939-45 War, it could appear that MARS and their publication *ANGLE*'s impact on Sydney architecture was modest. Although no distinct MARS style or methodology emerged, the long-term effect of this shared community of modernist ideas, however, strengthened the progressive architecture position in the Sydney region. The collective goals of the MARS group were interwoven with their publications, the penetration into professional organizations, the public lives and personal friendships.

Morton Herman became a popular architectural historian and prominent member of the NSW RAIA while most of the architects, including Baldwinson, continued to develop their respective careers. Kenneth Goble founded a construction firm. Bunning became a major figure in regional planning in NSW. After John D. Moore had collected a Sulman Award in 1937 for a wing of Frensham School with Morton Herman on the jury, the MARS members began a long association with the NSW RAIA Awards Committee. Eric Andrew and his partner Winsome Hall (later Andrew) won a NSW Sulman Award in 1939 for their Manly Surf Pavilion (now demolished), Manly Beach. Fellow MARS member Herman was on the

jury. Gerard McDonell won the 1940 Sulman Award in the following year for his McDonell House, Gordon. MARS members Herman, John D. Moore and R. Haughton James were on this jury. But of the utmost importance to the encouragement of modernism in NSW, former MARS members were represented on all of the Sulman Award juries from 1939 until 1954.

DESIGN AND INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (DIAA)

As MARS was gathering momentum, Baldwinson became involved in the creation of a professional association for designers. He had had considerable experience in display design in Britain as well as his display and furniture work at Stephenson & Turner. The impetus for the organization of an Australian design organisation was drawn directly from the British Design and Industries Association (DIA) experience. Maxwell Fry and many of Baldwinson's professional colleagues at Raymond McGrath's were activist members of the DIA.⁴⁹² Following the appearance of the London designer R. Haughton (better known as "Jimmy") James in Sydney, Baldwinson became directly involved in one of James's many personal campaigns, the transplantation of a professional association for designers, the Design and Industries Association of Australia (DIAA).

The organisation began on 30 November 1939 with Baldwinson as a founder member including R.G. Menzies as patron, vice-presidents Sir Keith Murdoch, Sir Ernest Fisk, Mr Charles Lloyd Jones, Russell Grimwade and Harold Clapp. The chair was Sydney Ure Smith, honorary secretary James and the honorary treasurer Russell Roberts. Early members included Douglas Annand, Geoffrey Collings, E. J. Hyde, William Knight, Frank Medworth and Gilbert Russell. The DIAA was based at Federation House, 166 Phillip Street, Sydney.⁴⁹³

With the declaration of war, late 1939 proved to be the worst possible time to launch a new organization and the DIAA was no sooner launched than it became dormant.

Jimmy James wrote to Baldwinson on 24 August 1940 that a decision must be made about the fate of the DIAA, perhaps to remain dormant until after the war.⁴⁹⁴ The DIAA then disappeared to be revived post-war as the Society of Designers for Industry (SDI), based in Melbourne where James had taken up residence. After winding down his wartime commitments, Baldwinson became a member of the Sydney Liaison Committee of the SDI.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹² Industrial design by Raymond McGrath, Serge Chermayeff, Wells Coates is illustrated in Herbert Read's seminal work on 20th century serial production *Art and Industry*, Faber & Faber, 1934.

⁴⁹³ R. Haughton James. "Why we formed the Design and Industries Association of Australia." *Australia, National Journal*. 4:1940, (Autumn issue), pps.8a, 8b.

⁴⁹⁴ R. Haughton James to ANB, 24 August 1940. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, Box Y4402. DIAA file.

⁴⁹⁵ Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792, Other Professional Activities.

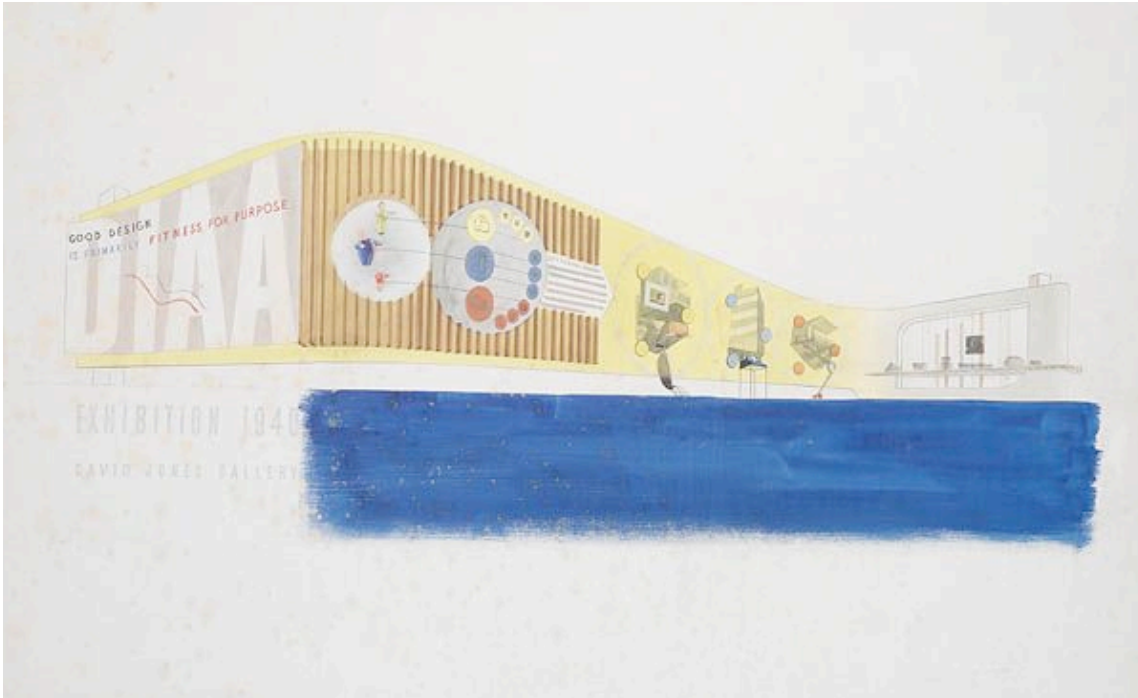


Figure 6-20. Arthur Baldwinson. Design and Industries Association of Australia. Exhibition Design. “Good Design is Primarily Fitness for Purpose.” David Jones Art Gallery, 1940. The DIAA exhibition programme was shelved by the 1939-45 War. Baldwinson papers, PXD 356, no. a977001r.

In 1941 the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) continued the BBC “Design” tradition by commissioning *Design in Everyday Things*, a series of wireless broadcasts and a publication featuring many of Baldwinson’s close friends such as MARS president Bunning, MARS member Tom O’Mahony and the interior designer Margaret Lord. DIAA organiser Jimmy James had a wireless console design reproduced in the publication. Baldwinson, in his roles in Australian design organizations, consistently promoted the use of radio to create interest in design topics. One of Baldwinson’s later clients, Alistair Morrison, designed the cover for the ABC’s publication.

SOCIETY OF DESIGNERS FOR INDUSTRY, VICTORIA

Like most Australian architects and designers, Baldwinson was drawn into war work and his involvement with the Commonwealth Department of Aircraft Production (DAP) required him to move to Melbourne. With the waning of his wartime projects, Baldwinson returned to his pre-war involvement in the professionalisation of Australian design through a Victorian revival of the 1939 Design and Industries Association of Australia (DIAA).



Figure 6-21. *Design in Everyday Things*. Cover by Alistair Morrison. Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1941 (left). *Design in Everyday Things*, BBC, 1937 (right).

The history of the Australian Society of Designers for Industry, the nation's first professional industrial design organisation, begins in Melbourne in 1947-48 when a group of design professionals including (once again) R. Haughton James (their inaugural president); furniture designer Grant Featherston; fabric designer and design retailer Frances Burke; industrial designers Frederick Ward and Charles Furey; graphic designer Max Forbes; Selwyn Coffey, Scorgie Anderson, I.M. (Max) Hutchinson, W. Falconer Green and Ron Rosenfeldt met to form the SDI.⁴⁹⁶ Baldwinson was winding down his Melbourne commitments in mid-1946 and played a small role in the early discussions regarding the creation of the SDI.⁴⁹⁷

In 1950 after he had successfully re-established his Sydney practice, Baldwinson became a founding member of the New South Wales Chapter of the SDI.⁴⁹⁸ He was joined by graphic designer Alistair Morrison, Gordon Andrews and the Fred Ward associate designer/architect Derek Wrigley.⁴⁹⁹ This NSW branch of the Society of Designers for Industry was later

⁴⁹⁶ An extensive account of this organisation is available on the Design Institute of Australia website. Ron Rosenfeldt. "The Establishment of the Society of Designers for Industry and its Development into the Industrial Design Institute of Australia." 1999. www.design.org.au/content.cfm?id=204. 10 August 2008.

⁴⁹⁷ Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792, Other professional Activities. 1945–1947. Correspondence regarding SDI Sydney liaison committee. ANB become a founding member of the Sydney chapter.

⁴⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹⁹ Michael Bogle. *Design in Australia. 1880-1970*, Craftsman House, 1998, p.113-114.

incorporated into the Design Institute of Australia (DIA). In NSW, a separate designers' group was formed as the Society for Industrial Designers of Australia (SIDA).

CONCLUSION

While MARS and the DIAA movements were destroyed by the social and political demands of the 1939-45 War, they planted the seeds of modernist activism in architecture and design. Their joint commitment was strengthened by their shared sense of community. The modernist enthusiasms of the architects associated with MARS were revived after the war and the NSW Institute of Architects (later the RAIA) in New South Wales was slowly infiltrated by this new modernist generation and many of these reformers ultimately became life Fellows and major figures in the development of Sydney architecture.⁵⁰⁰ Although he continued to promote modernism through talks to arts organisations, MARS proved to be Baldwinson's last major involvement in design reform in architecture. After the Department of Aircraft Production released him, he returned to Sydney to restart his career.

⁵⁰⁰ The break-away tradition within the profession continues today with the formation of the Australian Architectural Association (www.architecture.org.au).

INTRODUCTION

As the 1939-45 War began, Baldwinson continued his private practice in Sydney and maintained his role within a Sydney-based “camoufleurs”, a camouflage study group. In 1940, as the European war intensified, he was appointed “Chief Architect” for the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation (CAC) Lidcombe, NSW and his commercial practice fell away. When the Commonwealth decided to initiate the Beaufort aircraft project at Fisherman’s Bend, Victoria to manufacture a twin-engine light bomber, Baldwinson was appointed the Chief Architect for the Beaufort Division of the Commonwealth Department of Aircraft Production (DAP) and made the move to Melbourne.

Aircraft manufacture in Australia relied heavily on sub-contracting arrangements with hundreds of subcontracting firms supplying parts and services. To manufacture the Beaufort aircraft, factories in Chullora NSW produced the front fuselage, Newport, Victoria workshops produced the rear fuselage and Islington, SA industries manufactured the centre fuselage and the wings. Final assembly took place at Fisherman’s Bend, Victoria.

From 1942 to 1945, Arthur Baldwinson’s team of architects and engineers had produced plans (mostly alterations and additions) for CAC and DAP factory buildings works in Lidcombe, NSW, Fishermen’s Bend and new buildings at Essendon Airport, Victoria, hanger works at Sydney’s Mascot Field and the GM-Holden defence contract works in Adelaide.

As orders for Beaufort aircraft dwindled, the Beaufort Division of the Department of Aircraft Production began to look for new products to take up production time and costs. With a post-war crisis in domestic housing forecast, the Commonwealth factory production of post-war housing was strongly supported by the Canberra Labor Government. The Victorian Housing Commission (VHC), the CAC and the DAP began to experiment with prefabricated housing. The steel Beaufort House designed by Baldwinson and his team and produced by the Commonwealth Department of Aircraft Production, Beaufort Division was one of the early prefabrication projects favoured with the VHC’s patronage.

The Beaufort House prefabrication design work and the development of the modernist dream of standardised machine-made housing established Baldwinson as a leader in the development of the mechanised manufacture of domestic housing in Australia. Although the Beaufort House project ran afoul of Victorian and federal politics, it was well received by the public and the architectural profession. In the face of political opposition, Baldwinson abandoned the Beaufort House project in 1946 to return to his architectural practice in Sydney. The stature of the project, however, provided Baldwinson with a reputation for expertise in prefabrication that persisted throughout his career.

BALDWINSON'S WARTIME WORK & THE BEAUFORT HOUSE

Following the declaration of war in 1939, Baldwinson was appointed "Chief Architect" for the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation (CAC) factory, Lidcombe, NSW. Lidcombe produced a range of parts including aircraft engines that were shipped to Fisherman's bend, Victoria for final assembly into airframes sourced from throughout Australia. At this time, Arthur and Elspeth were living in Manly and his defence work at Lidcombe would have allowed him to continue to remain in Sydney. As the war progressed, Baldwinson was required to take on architectural roles wherever CAC production was underway. The CAC, initially a commercial corporation, was a model of industrial-scale production utilising the contemporary high tolerance specifications and production methods required for aircraft production.

As the war began to draw to a close with the Australian and American advances through the Pacific, there was increasing surplus production capacity within the CAC, now under the wartime control of the Commonwealth's Department of Aircraft Production (DAP). To maintain the highly skilled workforce and the industrial production facilities, the DAP management began to explore prefabricated housing production through a project known as the Beaufort House.

Australian Military Aircraft Production

In 1936, a syndicate initiated by Essington Lewis, the Chief Executive of Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd (BHP) with Broken Hill Smelters and General Motors-Holden began to develop a "self-sufficient aircraft industry based on Australian raw materials and industrial facilities".⁵⁰¹

The license to produce a single engine aircraft, the North American 33 (NA-33) known in Australia as the Wirraway, was obtained and plans were prepared for a factory at Fishermen's Bend, Victoria. In October, Orient Steam Navigation Company and the Electrolytic Zinc Company of Australasia joined a syndicate of investors, registered as the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation (CAC). The CAC factory was completed in September 1937. At the time of its establishment, it was thought that the CAC would now be able to produce state-of-the-art aircraft for the next five years (until 1942).⁵⁰²

In time, subsidiary factories were based in Highett, Victoria (magnesium foundry), Granville, NSW, (sheet and extruded aluminium), Lidcombe, NSW (forging of engine parts), Adelaide, SA (steel tubing) and Sydney (undercarriages). These diverse operations prepared components for the Wirraway and the first flight of this Australian-manufactured aircraft took place in March 1939.

⁵⁰¹ D.P. Mellor. "The Aircraft Industry." *The Role of Science and Industry*, Volume 5. *Australia in the War of 1939-45*. Series 4, Civil. Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1956, p.381.

⁵⁰² S.J. Butlin. "War Economy 1939-1942." Volume 3. *Australia in the War of 1939-45*. Series 4, Civil. Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1955, p.7.

In early 1939, a British Air Ministry mission inspected the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation's operations and recommended the Australian licensing and manufacture of a "front line" two-engine bomber (the Beaufort) designed by the Bristol Aeroplane Company rather than the now-outmoded Wirraway. The Commonwealth Government embraced this recommendation and steps were taken to obtain the plans and machine tools for the production of this aircraft. But by the time of the declaration of war by Prime Minister Robert Menzies on 3 September 1939, only 12 Wirraways had been manufactured and the first flight of an Australian-made Beaufort was two years away.⁵⁰³

In 1940, Arthur Baldwinson began work for the CAC factory, Lidcombe, NSW. CAC Lidcombe fabricated engine cylinders and other alloy parts for the CAC's Wirraway and after 1941, parts for the Beaufort aircraft. At the Lidcombe factory, Baldwinson met the engineer Eric Gibson.⁵⁰⁴ In 1946, the two men were to form their architectural partnership Gibson & Baldwinson.

In July 1940, the British-Australian partnership for the manufacture of the Beaufort aircraft was shaken by a terse telegram from the British Air Ministry:

*From this day onward Australia can rely on England for no further supplies of any aircraft materials or equipment of any kind.*⁵⁰⁵

To redress this partnership crisis, the Commonwealth Government created the Department of Aircraft Production (DAP) twelve months later and placed it under the direction of Essington Lewis, the leader of the original syndicate that had formed the CAC.⁵⁰⁶ Operating independently of the CAC but inter-dependent on supplies and skills, the Department of Aircraft Production was solely responsible for the Beaufort project while the CAC continued to make the Wirraway and as the war continued, other combat aircraft.

The DAP, like the CAC, relied heavily on sub-contracting arrangements with companies throughout Australia. The Beaufort project, for example, relied on 600 subcontracting firms for parts and services.⁵⁰⁷ Factories in Chullora NSW produced the front fuselage, Newport, Victoria workshops produced the rear fuselage and Islington, SA industries manufactured the centre fuselage and the wings. The aircraft were assembled at Fisherman's Bend, Victoria. When production of the Beaufort aircraft was at its peak in 1942, this vast network of suppliers produced a respectable 37 bombers per month at the main assembly plant in Melbourne.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰³ *ibid.*, p.386.

⁵⁰⁴ A.E. Gibson, consulting engineer, was identified as a member of the Beaufort Division Executive in the 1941-42 Annual Report. Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Aircraft Production, Beaufort Division, 1942-43.

⁵⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p.388.

⁵⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p.388-389.

⁵⁰⁷ D.P. Mellor. *op. cit.*, p.392.

⁵⁰⁸ Baldwinson papers, PXD 356, ff.432-443



Figure 6-1. The Beaufort Bomber. Australian War Memorial. Photo No. OG 3363.



Figure 6-2. The Beaufort Works. Fisherman's Bend, ca. 1944. Australian War Memorial. No. 139079P.

By 1942, Baldwinson's team of architects and engineers had produced plans (alterations and additions) for CAC and DAP factory building works in Lidcombe, NSW, Fishermen's Bend, Victoria and the GM-Holden defence contract works in Adelaide.

As the Beaufort project began to manufacture aircraft, his increasing responsibilities and the acceleration in wartime production required a move to Melbourne and he and Elspeth took a flat in Romberg and Shaw's innovative Glenunga Flats in the suburbs. His team produced a number of new industrial buildings:

1. Beaufort gun turret plant, Fairfield, NSW (1942)⁵⁰⁹
2. Flight sheds, Fishermen's Bend, Victoria (1942)⁵¹⁰
3. Butler combat hanger, Mascot NSW (undated, ca.1944)⁵¹¹
4. Beaufort repair and modifications plant, Essendon, Victoria (1945)⁵¹²
5. Design of the Beaufort House, Fishermen's Bend, Victoria (1946)



Figure 6-3. Romberg and Shaw. Glenunga Flats, 1941. This was the Baldwinsons' residence during the CAC/DAP work at the Beaufort Works. October 2006.

From this distance, it is difficult to determine Baldwinson's precise design role in the development of the Beaufort Division of the CAC but the drawings of the aircraft buildings in the Baldwinson Papers demonstrate that he was the approving authority for the department team. One thing is certain, however, under the pressure of wartime production, function over-ruled form in the design and construction of defence works.

⁵⁰⁹ Baldwinson papers, PXD 356, ff.444-501.

⁵¹⁰ *ibid.*, ff.502-540, plants 1-7.

⁵¹¹ Baldwinson papers, PXD 736, photos 39-48, PXD 356, ff.526c.

⁵¹² *ibid.*, PXD 356, ff.541-551.

For the managers of Essington Lewis's CAC, the production of war *materiel* was more important than producing innovative architecture but as the immediate threat of invasion began to recede and the US military island-hopped further into the Pacific theatre, some architectural experimentation began to appear at the Beaufort Repair and Modifications Plant, Essendon Airport.



Figure 6-4. Arthur Baldwinson. Beaufort Repair and Modifications Plant, 1943. [Essendon Airport]. Photograph 1949. Baldwinson papers, PXD 736, items 41-66.

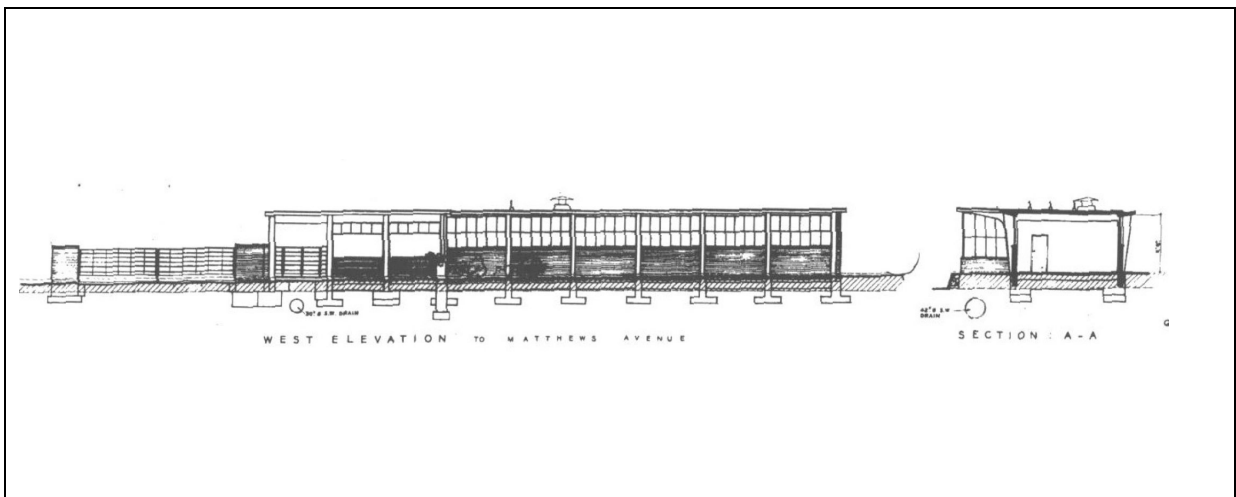


Figure 6-5. Arthur Baldwinson. Elevations for the entrance to the Beaufort Repair and Modifications Plant, 1945. [Essendon Airport]. Baldwinson papers, PXD 736, items 41-66.

The plant and offices at Essendon drew on the well-known Willem Dudok vocabulary of unadorned brickwork, corner towers with masonry-faced clocks and reinforced concrete slabs forming the rooflines and framing the window canopies. This modernist masonry style was well developed in Melbourne by the early 1940s and Norman Seabrook's landmark South Melbourne building, the MacRobertson Girls High School (1934) had a major impact in Victoria.⁵¹³ There are also visual parallels with the Seabrook and Fildes Brunswick Fire Station (1937), Brunswick, Melbourne.



Figure 6-6. Seabrook and Fildes. Brunswick Fire Station, 1937. users.tce.rmit.edu.au/E03159/ModMelb/ Photo Doug Evans. ca.2000. May 2004.

The unusual form of the entranceway to the Beaufort Repair and Modifications Plant reflects some of the delicately formed concrete works that Baldwinson and his generation had seen in Britain and Europe. F.R.S Yorke's illustrations of the work of the Hungarian Ludwig Kezma in *The Modern House* (1934 and later editions) and Raymond McGrath's illustration of Hubacher & Steiger's 1931 Zurich holiday house in *Twentieth Century Houses* (1934) has some resonance with the Essendon Airport entrance work.

⁵¹³ Doug Evans. "Modern in Melbourne. Two Ways of Being Modern." www.tce.rmit.edu.au/E03159/ModMelb/ May 2004.

Frederick Romberg also designed similar cantilevered columns for his Pettifer House project of 1943. The Kemnal Manor College of Technology, Seven Oaks Way, Sidcup, Kent (completed 1938) by W.H. Robinson also uses similar columns. Coincidentally, Robinson's work was underway while Baldwinson was working on the nearby Gropius and Fry commission the Donaldson House (1936), Seven Oaks, Kent.

The Essendon work was important to Baldwinson and his papers reveal that despite the wide range of his wartime architectural work, he only sought to publish the Beaufort Repair and Modifications Plant, Essendon Airport and the Beaufort House in Australian architectural journals. The prefabricated Beaufort House did not appear in the architectural literature until 1950 while the Beaufort Repair and Modifications Plant did not appear until 1952 when *Architecture* published a feature.^{514 515}



Figure 6-7. Arthur Baldwinson. Entrance to the Beaufort Repair and Modifications Plant, 1943. [Essendon Airport]. Photograph 1949. Baldwinson Papers, PXD 736, items 41-66.

⁵¹⁴ "The Beaufort Home." *Architecture*. October-December, 1952, p.132.

⁵¹⁵ "Aircraft Repair Plant." *Architecture*. October-December 1952, p.135.



Figure 6-8. W.H. Robinson. Kemnal Manor College of Technology, Seven Oaks Way, Sidcup, Kent, 1938. In Alan Powers. *Modern. The Modern Movement in Britain*. Merrell, 2005.

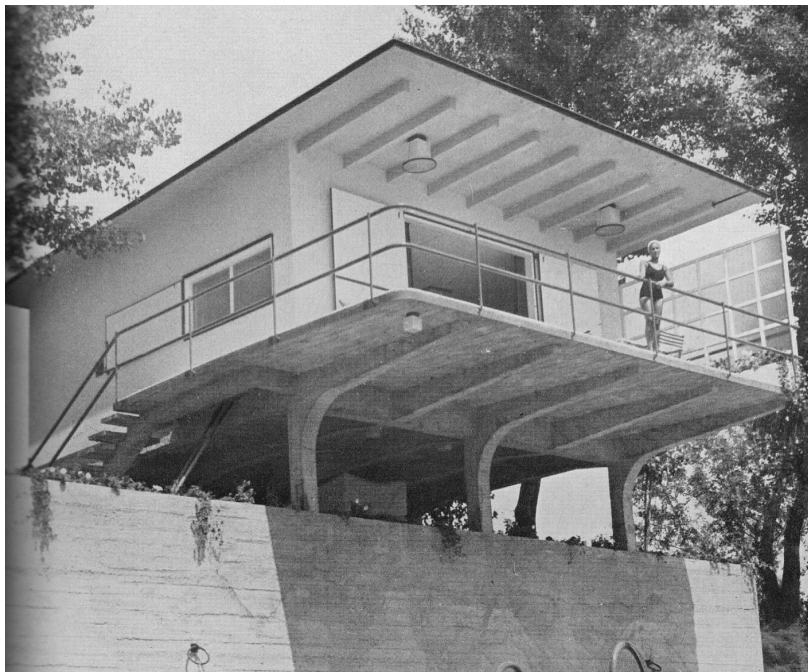


Figure 6-9. Ludwig Kezma. Danube holiday house, 1935. Yorke. *The Modern House*, 1934 p.120.

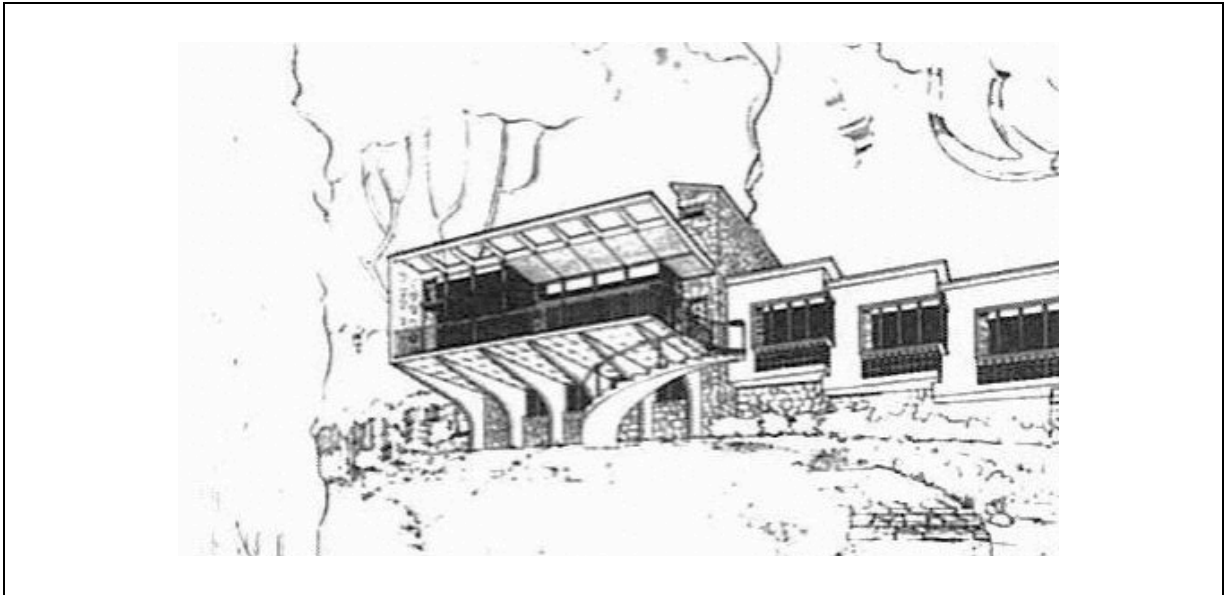


Figure 6-10. Frederick Romberg. Detail, Pettifer House, 1943. Cantilevered concrete columns similar to the Beaufort Repair and Modifications Plant at the Essendon Airport. Illustration from Edquist, *The Architecture of Migration 1938-1975*, p.89.

THE POST-WAR HOUSING CRISIS

As the war progressed and an allied victory was assured, Australian defence industries began to wind down. Orders for Beaufort aircraft dwindled and there was massive surplus manufacturing capacity. Anticipating this dilemma, some years before the war's end, the Directorate of Post-War Reconstruction had begun to plan Australia's return to normalcy.

The Commonwealth Labor Government had forecast a post-war crisis in domestic housing as early as 1942. Mindful of the social unrest that plagued Australia and the United Kingdom after the 1914-18 War, they sought to address the housing shortage with a Commonwealth-directed programme. H.V. Evatt wrote in 1942, "A bold housing policy should necessarily be a leading feature of national policy after the war. The state governments had commended housing plans before the war, but it is not suggested that they are sufficient. [...]. The task is one of great magnitude and judging from the experience of the past, it cannot be left either to private enterprise or to the states. A task so large and so important will require a national plan, of course, with the active cooperation of the state local governing authorities."⁵¹⁶

With the encouragement of the Commonwealth and later, the Victorian Housing Commission, the CAC and the DAP had begun to experiment with prefabricated housing as early as 1943. The Beaufort-built prefabricated house designed by the technical staff of the

⁵¹⁶ H.V. Evatt. *Post-War Reconstruction. A Case for Greater Commonwealth Powers*. Prepared for the Constitutional Convention at Canberra, November 1942. p.74-76.

Beaufort Division of the Department of Aircraft production was the first to appear. The project director was John Storey and the project architect was Arthur Baldwinson.⁵¹⁷

Baldwinson's sentiments regarding centralised control of housing construction were revealed in a 1 February 1944 letter to his associate Walter Bunning at the Ministry for Post War Reconstruction:

Dear Walter

Thank you for the copy of the First Interim Report of the Housing Commission.

[...] You know that our Government Aircraft Industry functions partly with Capitalism. Don't think that I support Capitalism, far from it, but you see it is very much with us.

The Beaufort Division has a host of Sub-contractors working for profit (War-Time Limited). [...] The manufactured parts are assumed by the government, and all direction and control is by the government, working without the profit motive just as efficiently as any private concern with the pressure of its long list of shareholders behind it.

[...] If the Government does not control building and actually do the final assembly and have a rigid Inspection system, then the bad old Jerry Builder will do everyone over again, apart from the load of all the side show profits such as Estate Agent's fees. In fact, everyone will get a cut except the Architects, the Engineers and the poor Goddamn householder.⁵¹⁸

Following the lead of the Commonwealth's forecast of a shortfall of housing, the Victorian Housing Commission (VHC) actively supported the extension of the industrial "assembly line" concept for the development of prefabricated housing during the last year of the 1939-45 War. The two main competitors for the VHC's patronage were the steel Beaufort House produced by the Department of Aircraft Production, Beaufort Division and the pre-formed concrete-slab Myer House manufactured by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation.

Victoria's Housing Commission was first formed in 1938 under the Minister for Housing; this required the creation of a new layer of administration within the Victorian State Government. External Boards were appointed to oversee the work of the Commission. This was in response to the nation-wide anxiety about a projected post-war housing shortage and a histrionic 1942 report on Melbourne by F.O. Barnett and W.O. Burt in *Housing the Australian Nation* ("blighted neighbourhoods", "vermin-infected", "decadent areas", et cetera).⁵¹⁹ The Victorian Housing Commission soon took an activist role in fostering efficiencies in the housing industry.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁷ "The Beaufort Home. Prefabricated in Steel." *Architecture*, October-December 1950, pps.132-133, in a feature on prefabrication, includes photograph, plan and construction details.

⁵¹⁸ ANB letter to Walter Bunning 1 February 1944, in Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792, Personal Correspondence.

⁵¹⁹ Barnett, F.O. and W.O. Burt. *Housing the Australian Nation*. : Research Group of the Left Book Club of Victoria, Melbourne, 1942. The authors cite a 1936-37 survey by the Slum Abolition Board of over 88,000 dwellings within a five mile radius of the Melbourne GPO.

It not only encouraged the production of pre-fabricated housing by the DAP and the CAC, it also began independently to develop new technologies in single-family housing and acquired a former munitions factory in Holmesglen to explore mass production techniques.⁵²¹ This included pressed steel roof tiles, pre-formed concrete modular homes based on a patent acquired from the Victorian inventor T.W. Fowler, imported timber structures from Europe and the DAP's new steel prototype manufactured at Fisherman's Bend, the Beaufort House.

OVERVIEW. FACTORY MADE HOUSING

While the use of standardised modular structures in Australia begins with Governor Arthur Phillip's timber and oilcloth house carried aboard the first convict fleet in Sydney in 1788, the use of prefabricated housing in Australia began in the early decades of the 19th century. Miles Lewis's survey, "The Portable House" establishes such landmarks as Lonsdale's House (1836), Melbourne (manufactured in timber by the Royal Engineers), John Manning's imported modular timber houses for C. J. LaTrobe (1839) and other timber house clients throughout Australia and New Zealand.⁵²² Harold Desbrowe Annear published plans for a "small semi-prefabricated modular house" in his journal *Every Man His Home* launched in 1922.⁵²³ The Beaufort House, however, belongs to the category of the prefabricated metal house manufactured through mass production techniques.

Standardised metal structures appeared later, most dramatically in the 1853 refining and coining factory of the Royal Mint, Sydney, ordered through the British Horsley Company and John Walker, Portable Building Maker.⁵²⁴ Lewis also reports on a number of metal churches and cottages imported and erected in the colony.⁵²⁵

The use of metals in prefabrication was enabled by the ability to standardise metal parts to high technical tolerances by the careful control of refining of materials such as iron and steel, copper, aluminium and zinc and their ultimate mechanised fabrication as cast, forged, die-cut, stamped or extruded elements.

⁵²⁰ The Realist Film Unit of the Communist Party of Australia also produced two exposés of Melbourne's inner suburban slums commissioned by the Brotherhood of St Lawrence in 1946-47, "Beautiful Melbourne" (ca. 12 mins.) and "A place to live." (13 mins.). These films were initially screened by the Brotherhood of St Lawrence.

⁵²¹ David Hayward. "The Reluctant Landlords. A History Of Public Housing In Australia." *Urban Policy and Planning*. Vol. 14:1, 1996.

⁵²² Miles Lewis. "The Portable House." *The History and Design of the Australian House*. R. Irving, editor. Oxford University Press, 1985. pps. 275-289.

⁵²³ Donald Johnson. *Australian Architecture 1901-1951*. Sydney University Press, 1980, p.72. Johnson may have cited this article in *Every Man His Home* without sighting it. Edquist provides a clear account of the journal that appeared in at least two issues ca. 1922. Harriet Edquist. *Harold Desbrowe Annear*. Melbourne University Press, 2004, p. 226-227.

⁵²⁴ Michael Bogle, et al. "The Royal Mint, Sydney 1853-1926." *Australian Journal of Multidisciplinary Engineering*. Vol. 2: 1, 2004.

⁵²⁵ Miles Lewis, op. cit., pps.275-289.

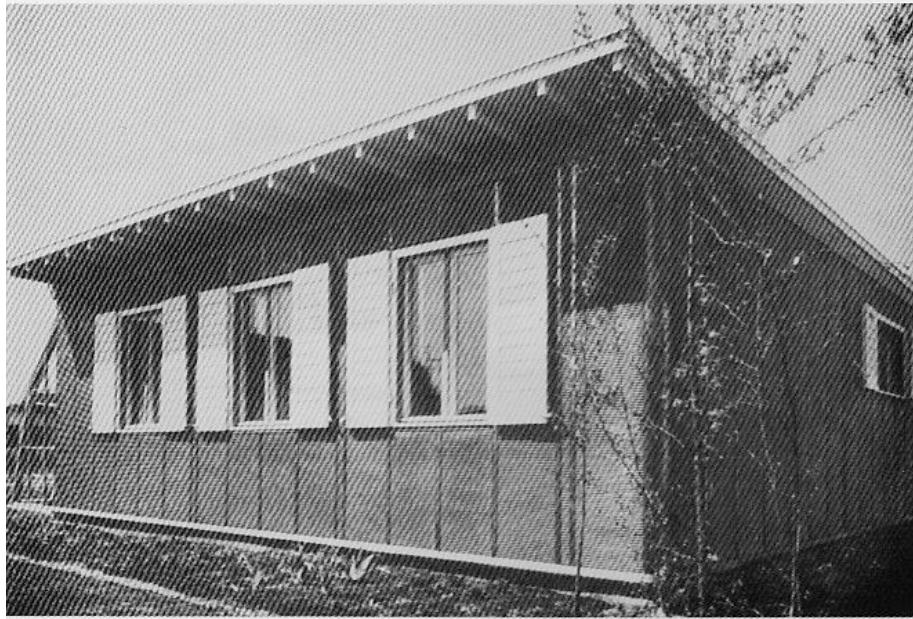


Figure 6-11. Walter Gropius. Hirsch copper-clad house, 1931. Corrugated copper external cladding, timber frame, aluminium foil insulation and asbestos-cement interior cladding. In Sigfried Giedion, *Walter Gropius*, p.196.

As Miles Lewis points out, “the dream of a factory-made house” is part of a continuous narrative in domestic architecture.⁵²⁶ Konrad Wachsmann, and his influential 1930 book *HolzHausbau. Technik und Gestaltung (Building the Wooden House)* had helped re-enthuse Europeans about the potential for manufactured housing. Wachsmann’s later partnership with Walter Gropius and other Europeans in the American General Panel Corporation (AGPC) in the immediate post-war period received widespread media attention in the architectural press.⁵²⁷ Colin Davies in *The Prefabricated Home* suggests that this persistent media enthusiasm is due to the initial involvement of Gropius in the AGPC programme.⁵²⁸

Gropius had, of course, considerable early experience in the 1931-33 design of prefabricated housing in metal, particularly, the *Hirsch Copper House* with a timber frame, aluminium foil insulation and a corrugated copper exterior erected on a concrete slab.⁵²⁹ The unstable

⁵²⁶ Miles Lewis. op. cit., pps. 275-289.

⁵²⁷ Konrad Wachsmann and Walter Gropius. “The House in Industry: A System for the Manufacture of industrialized building elements.” *Arts and Architecture*, November, 1947. “What is a House?” *Arts and Architecture*, July 1944. The AGPC housing used a prefabricated steel and timber system.

⁵²⁸ Colin Davies. *The Prefabricated Home*. Reaktion Books, 2005, pps.19-25.

⁵²⁹ The Hirsch Kupfer-und Messingwerke. Finow, Germany. Gilbert Herbert. *Dream of the Factory-made House, Walter Gropius and Konrad Wachsmann*. MIT Press, 1984. Maciuka also notes that Gropius has developed a proposal for prefabricated workers’ housing as early as 1910. John Maciuka. *Before the Bauhaus*. Cambridge University Press, 2005, p.277.

commodity prices for copper would have made this project a very risk-laden venture.⁵³⁰ Metals, however, continued to captivate the more sophisticated thinking of prefabrication designers for the next century and by the 1939-45 War, pressures of wartime demanded that the early 20th century concepts were updated to incorporate the new methods and materials of the 1940s.

A 1946 British book edited by John Madge, *Tomorrow's Houses*, based on wartime research provides a contemporary summary of the wartime prefabrication movement and its integration into mass production techniques.⁵³¹ Madge's book summarises the current British trends during the 1939-45 War and represents a résumé of thinking in prefabrication during Baldwinson's gestation period for the Beaufort House.

Tomorrow's Houses began with a discussion of the properties of aluminium adapted to mass-produced housing, then moved the summary into the area of plastics, laminated wood (plywood), the use of lightweight concrete and the steel-framed house. The discussion of the advantages of steel-framed structures made much of the speed of transport, the lightness of the load-bearing members and speed of erection of a standardised prefabricated steel house. Copper by the 1940s is far too expensive a commodity for the consideration of the Hirsch *Kupfer-und-Messingwerke* prefabricated metal house.

Madge also finds that the weather-resistance of a house with steel exterior panelling is a major asset for a steel structure.⁵³² In the survey, there is recognition of issues of steel corrosion but the degree of this problem and its association with condensation was not recognised at this stage of steel house design development. This condensation and corrosion nexus became an issue in the Beaufort House.

In exploring prefabrication concepts of the mid 1940s, *Tomorrow's Houses*, makes it clear that despite its novelty in Australian construction in the post-war period, the steel-framed house, the techniques for forming the components and the methods for construction were not novel concepts but well-established modernist methodologies within the Anglo-British nations of Great Britain, Canada, the United States. With the development of Baldwinson's DAP design for the Beaufort steel house; Australia joined this select group of machine-made housing international modernists.

The RAIAs' journal *Architecture* devoted a special issue on post-war prefabrication in October/December 1950 to provide a very limited stocktake of postwar conventional prefabrication but focussed on standardisation of timber construction components and wrote at length on the 1948 "Victorian Precut Housing Project" ("Operation Snail") discussed below. This seems to be the first appearance of Baldwinson's Beaufort House in the professional press.⁵³³

⁵³⁰ Gropius's designs are best illustrated in *The Walter Gropius Archive*. Winfried Nerdinger, editor. Harvard University Art Museums, 1990, vol.2, p.237. The original design was developed in 1924 by Forster and Krafft. Walter Gropius was commissioned to improve design in 1931. Gilbert Herbert, op. cit.

⁵³¹ John Madge, editor. *Tomorrow's House*. Pilot Press, London, 1946.

⁵³² *ibid.*, p.145-175.

⁵³³ "Feature: Prefabrication." *Architecture*. October-December, 1950. RAIA.

Other postwar prefabrication projects that utilised a high percentage of unconventional steel construction or concrete included the 1945 Myer House (steel frame with a cement coating over insulated board for the exterior surfaces), marketed by the Myer Department Store organization (later suspended); the 1945 Commonwealth Housing Department steel house design project by their Planning Division (fate unknown); the Victorian Housing Commission's T.W. Fowler patented tilt-slab housing project of 1940 (3000 units manufactured); and the Frederick Romberg 1945 design project for a two-level steel house (did not proceed).⁵³⁴ The Commonwealth Experimental Building Station, Ryde, NSW also imported and erected Airoh, Seco, Tarran and Arcon prefabricated houses for "examination and technical study".⁵³⁵

THE BEAUFORT HOUSE PROJECT

The Baldwinson papers show that the DAP's concept for the Beaufort House began to develop as early as 1943. The organisational structure for the 1943 development of a prototype is shown in the figure below. He was intimately involved in the project and also provided much of the descriptive text to support the marketing of the house.

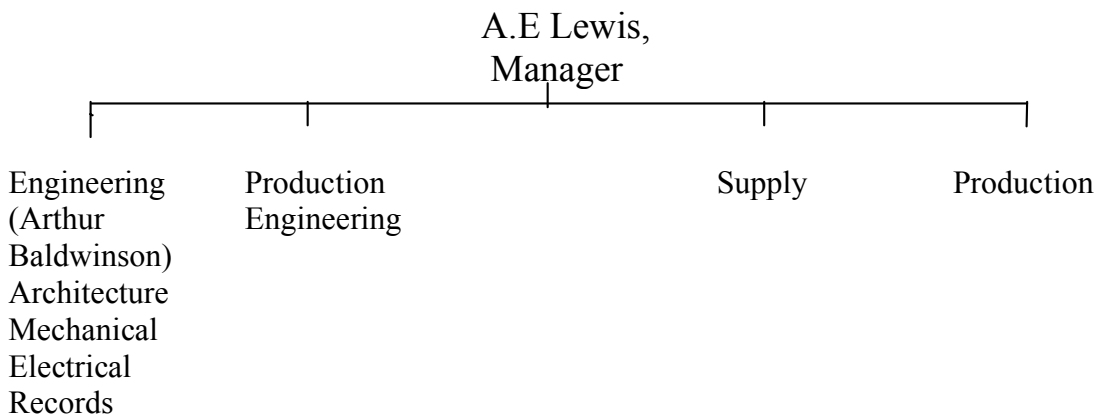


Figure 6-12. Organisation of the Beaufort Housing Project Prototype.⁵³⁶

⁵³⁴ Philip Goad. "The Modern House in Melbourne." PhD Thesis. Department of Architecture and Building, Melbourne University, 1992, pps.3/16-3/29 provides a survey of these failed projects.

⁵³⁵ NSW RAIA Chapter Bulletin, July 1946, pps.2-3.

⁵³⁶ Organisation charts, Beaufort Division, Department of Aircraft Production. 1943-1945. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792.

Beaufort Home Prototype, Architecture and Engineering⁵³⁷

The house is planned to fit the way of living of the average Australian family, and to be capable of location in any environment and site.

The construction, which is of a permanent nature, but not using the usual building materials, is designed with standard units, simply bolted together; plain wall panels being interchangeable with window and door panels. All units are based on a grid of three feet, allowing a wide variety of plans to be pieced together, thus avoiding monotony.

The basic material is sheet steel formed for strength and spot-welded into components. The wall panel steel sheeting is designed as a stressed skin giving tremendous bracing strength to the structure; a construction technique borrowed from the aircraft industry. The external wall surface is flat with a sand texture and the walls and roof may be any colour.

*Insulation against heat and cold is provided with two-inch thickness of rockwool packed into walls and ceiling, giving insulation value far greater than orthodox brick construction.*⁵³⁸

The prototype home, which is a minimum type, consists of a combined living room and hall, 21 feet by 12 feet, kitchen dinette, two bedrooms, bathroom, separate W.C., laundry and a utility area useful as a children's play space or for odd jobs.

Equipment, including wardrobes and all storage is built in. The living room has a special wood fuel fireplace constructed as an air-conditioning unit with ducts conveying warmed air to the dinette and bedroom. An electric hot water installation is connected to a stainless steel kitchen sink and to all fittings in the bathroom and laundry.

⁵³⁷ Baldwinson typescript of a press release describing the prototype. A.N. Baldwinson. "Beaufort Home. 31 May 1946." Baldwinson papers MLMSS 7792, See also Baldwinson papers MLMSS 1993, Beaufort Home, 1946, PXD 356, ff.444-445.

⁵³⁸ "Rockwool" is manufactured fibre spun from molten stone. "In Australia the first mineral wool [from basalt] is said to have been produced locally in 1934 by Bradford Brothers (later Bradford Insulation)." Correspondence with Miles Lewis, 12 May 2007.

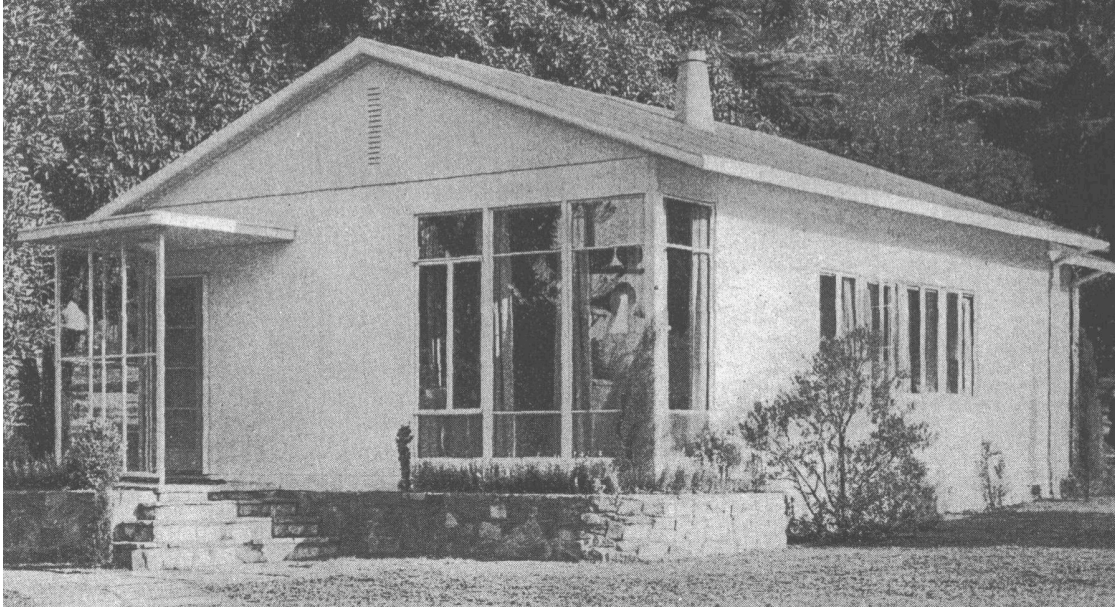


Figure 6-13. *The Beaufort House (Design no. 8). Treasury Gardens, Melbourne, 1946. Architecture. November-December 1950.*

When the prototype Beaufort Home (Design no. 8) premiered on 5 June 1946 in the Treasury Gardens (at the corner of Wellington Parade and Landsdowne Street), Melbourne, eight models of the steel house had been designed but only one prototype had been fabricated.

While it is not clear if all models proceeded to prototype, two types were built (Type 2 and Type 8) and supplied as public projects in Melbourne and Canberra. The Beaufort-green colour brochure distributed to visitors outlined the centralised approach to housing that guided the Victorian State Housing Commission and the Commonwealth in the years immediately following 1945.

*The Beaufort Home is the culmination of intensive research in design, durability, insulation and equipment by the Beaufort Division of the Department of Aircraft Production, in association with the Victorian State Housing Commission and the Commonwealth Department of Works and Housing through the Experimental Building Station. The Commonwealth financed the project.*⁵³⁹

⁵³⁹ Beaufort Homes Brochure, 1946. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, PXA 372:5.



Figure 6-14. Arthur Baldwinson. The Beaufort Home, Treasury Gardens (Design no.8). The Kitchen and Dinette, 1946. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, PXA 372.

As an indication of the Commonwealth's enthusiasm for the project, H.P. Lazzarini, the Commonwealth Minister for Working and Housing and N.J.O Makin, Minister for the Navy, Munitions and Aircraft Production, attended the official opening.⁵⁴⁰ When the Beaufort House was opened for public inspection, brochures introduced the house to the public and photographs of the event show that visitors were guided through the house in small groups.⁵⁴¹

This promotion of the Beaufort House continued in Canberra in January 1947 when the Commonwealth Director General, Department of Works and Housing invited the Beaufort Division to erect a three-bedroom Beaufort House (Design No.2) in Ainslie, ACT.⁵⁴² The voluminous Commonwealth files associated with this single order and its fulfilment provide insights into some of the technical problems associated with the use and service of the Beaufort House.

⁵⁴⁰ Identified from photo "Official Opening" in the Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, PXA 5:26.

⁵⁴¹ Baldwinson's appointment diary includes notation of Official Opening of Beaufort Home, 5 June 1946. "Leave Beaufort Division after 4 1/2 years service on 5 July 1946." Baldwinson papers MLMSS 7792, 1946 Appointment Diary.

⁵⁴² M.B. Woodfull, Director, Aircraft Factories to Mr Potts, Director, Department of Works and Housing, Canberra, 30 January 1947. National Archives A292/C23639, Item 2.

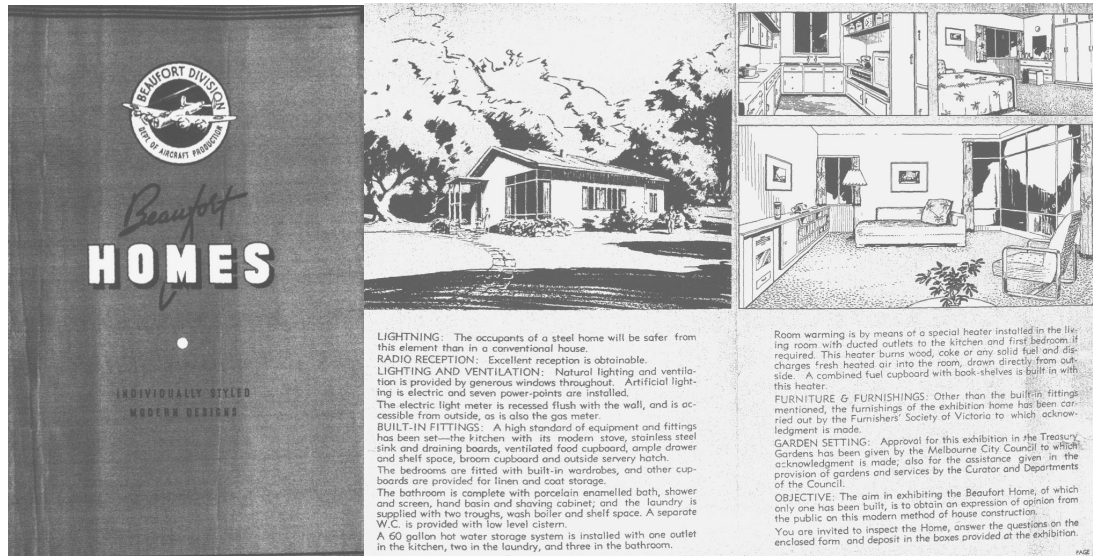


Figure 6-15. Beaufort Homes brochure detail, 1946. Three folds of the eight-fold Beaufort Homes promotional brochure. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, PXA 372:5.

A three-bedroom Beaufort House was shipped from Fisherman's Bend to Canberra by lorry and installed opposite the corner of Cox and Cowper Streets, Ainslie and opened daily for public viewing from 19 April to 27 April 1947. During this opening, 4644 visitors, including the Prime Minister, Ben Chifley, toured the house in small, escorted groups.⁵⁴³

This house has remained in its original location and has been continually occupied since its installation in 1947. The current owners, Mr and Mrs Goudie, bought the house in 1954. "We didn't want to wait for a Government house, so we went looking for a house." The Goudies were attracted to the Beaufort House by its price, £3000.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴³ M.B. Woodfull, Director, Aircraft Factories to Director, Department of Works and Housing, Canberra. 29 April 1947. National Archives A292/C23639. Item 89.

⁵⁴⁴ Interview with the Goudie family in Bruce Wright in *Cornerstone of the Capital. A History of Public Housing in Canberra*. ACT Housing, ACT Government, 2000, pps.34-35.

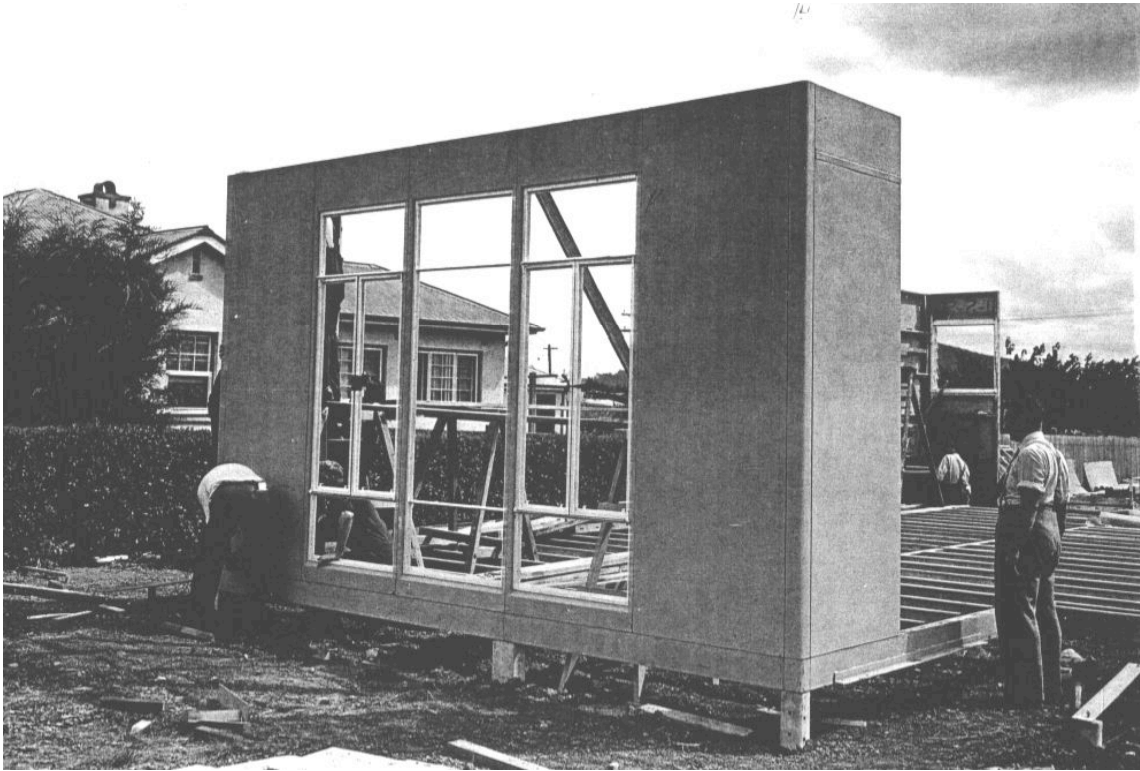


Figure 6-16. The Beaufort Home (Design no. 2) under construction in Canberra, 1947. Australian Archives A292/C23639.

Following the public openings in April 1947, Ron Mendelson, Principal Research Officer in the ACT Department of Works and Housing and his young family occupied the house on the 3rd of May for a thorough testing of its features.

While there were a few minor problems with finishes and warping of timber doors, the most serious issues arose from the elemental properties of the steel used to fabricate the house. A letter from the Director of the Housing Division of ACT Works and Services to M.B. Woodfull, Director of the Beaufort Division in November 1947 describes the more serious defects in detail.⁵⁴⁵

1. Rusting of the load-bearing steel channels forming the wall plates supporting the wall joists. [Probably from moisture accumulating from condensation on inner walls].
2. Condensation on the underside of the roof falling on the fibrous plaster ceiling tiles and producing staining. A.W. Welch explained in a letter of 6 November 1947 “during the frosty season the “ceiling is almost permanently wet”.

⁵⁴⁵ A.W. Welch, Director of Housing, ACT Works and Services to M.B. Woodfull, Director of the Beaufort Division. 6 November 1947. National Archives A292/C23639. Items 81-82.



Figure 6-17. The Beaufort House (Design no. 2). Cowper Street, Ainslie suburb of Canberra, ACT. February 2007.

While the heat transfer qualities of sheet steel clearly produced the condensation problems associated with the house, there was no mention of intrinsic defects in the Beaufort House. No complaints were received regarding heat transfer from sunlight and the house was rated by its earliest Canberra occupants as “comfortable”. These condensation-based defects in the Canberra received remedial treatment by the Beaufort Division of the DAP and the moisture issues seemed to have been resolved.

Like all of the prefabricated houses discussed, developed and imported in the aftermath of the 1939-45 War, the Beaufort House was intended for the first home buyer and was designed to sell for modest sums; the Design No. 2 Beaufort 3-bedroom house was to cost £1800.⁵⁴⁶ Although Canberra discussed orders for 200 Beaufort Homes, the commission was never placed. The Victorian Housing Commission proved to be the largest purchaser for the units while other units were apparently purchased as site residences for post-war public works projects. While a final figure of 200 Beaufort units has been repeated by a number of authorities, it has not proved possible to determine precisely how many houses were produced. Greg Holman asserts that only 23 units were constructed.⁵⁴⁷ Other sources say 24.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁶ Although there was considerable discussion about the costs of erection and landscaping the ACT paid £1805 for the Ainslie Beaufort House. National Archives, A292/C23639. Item 202.

⁵⁴⁷ Greg Holman, *Arthur Baldwinson. His Houses and Works*. Bachelor of Architecture, Hons. Thesis, UNSW, 1980.p.131. No reference source is supplied for this figure.

⁵⁴⁸ Frances Pennington, original Victorian Housing Commission Board Member states 24 units in her typescript history, “A Decade of Housing” in the VHC Library, cited in *New Houses for Old. Fifty Years of Public*



Figure 6-18. Beaufort House (Design no.8). 55 Reed Street, Spotswood, Victoria. September 2005.

Design Analysis of the Beaufort Home

Underlying the development of the DAP's "factory-made house" is the modernist vision of standardised housing with interchangeable components, modular plans and elevations produced at a price accessible to every citizen. It is an international expression with acknowledgements to similar design work in Britain and Wachsman and Gropius' ambitious post-war General Panel Corporation in the USA.⁵⁴⁹ While Baldwinson's gable-fronted Beaufort House did not follow the form of the modernist programme of flat roofs and open plans, it provides the essence of modernism: a "scientific kitchen" with appliances and electric hot water, low or minimum maintenance, heating and cooling integrated within the structure and a system of mass-produced modular construction that would allow for infinite expansion of the basic unit. These features are provided at a reasonable price.

Housing in Victoria. 1938-1988. Renate Howe, editor, Ministry of Housing and Construction, Melbourne, 1988, p.56.

⁵⁴⁹ Several metal prefabricated housing units also appeared in the USA including Buckminster Fuller's aluminium prototype project "Wichita House" (one unit erected) and the enamelled steel Lustron house (approximately 2500 units erected). See Colin Davies. *The Prefabricated Home*. Reaktion Books, 2005.

In construction and form, the Department of Aircraft Production's Beaufort House is most profitably compared to the range of prefabricated wartime houses produced in Britain. Despite the chilling British message of July 1940, "From this day onward Australia can rely on England for no further supplies of any aircraft materials or equipment of any kind", the extensive technology transfer between Britain and Australia continued throughout the 1939-45 War.⁵⁵⁰

Unlike the Beaufort House, prefabricated housing in the United Kingdom was designed to address the problems of extensive housing losses from German bombing of British cities. Materials for prefabrication included timber, asbestos cement sheeting, steel and aluminium sheeting. These strategies and innovations with materials provide the essential precedents for Baldwinson's work. While there is no suggestion that Baldwinson had any prior knowledge of Walter Gropius' *Hirsch* copper-formed house, it also provides some precedents for a composite metal-structured dwelling. The British prefabrication units contain a number of features that later appeared in the Beaufort House.

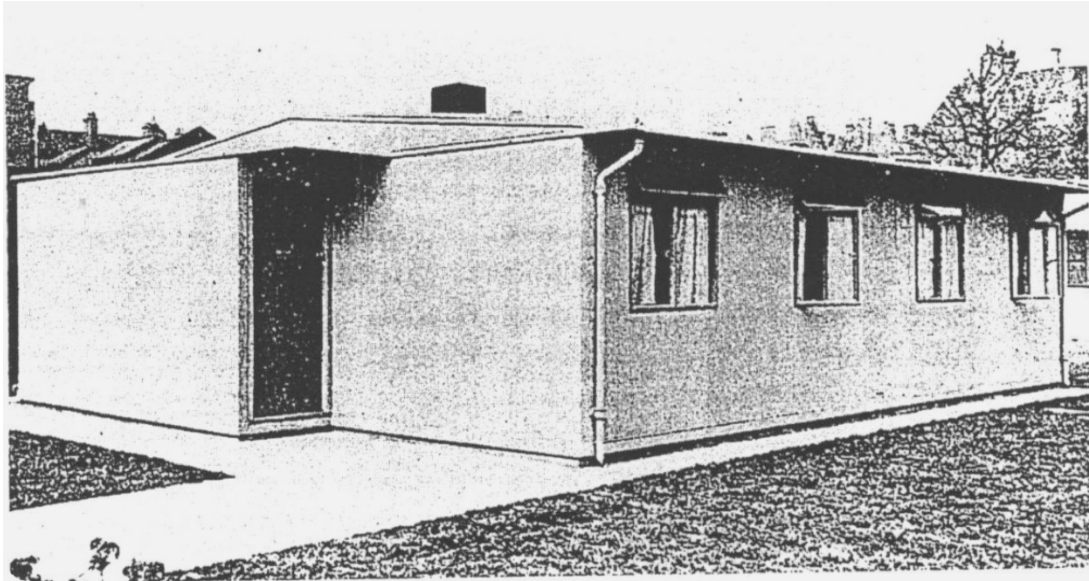


Figure 6-19. The steel Portal Bungalow. Brenda Vale. *Prefabs. The History of the UK Temporary Housing Programme*.

The Portal Bungalow

By 1944, the British Ministry of Works has developed the *Portal Bungalow* (named for Lord Portal, Minister of Works) as a steel-framed, house with steel external cladding and plywood panelling internally. The house was equipped with full appliances. Like the Beaufort House, a fuel heater supplied heat to other rooms through overhead ducts. Although the Portal

⁵⁵⁰ D.P. Mellor. "The Aircraft Industry." *The Role of Science and Industry*, Volume 5. *Australia in the War of 1939-45*. Series 4, Civil. Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1956, p.387.

Bungalow never proceeded past prototypes, it was on exhibition daily from May 1944 at the Tate Gallery, London⁵⁵¹

The ARCON Mark I-V

Unlike the Portal Bungalow, the British Ministry of Works constructed approximately 40,000 units of the ARCON house after April 1944 when sections of design were on public exhibition^{552 553}. The ARCON Mark I-V was built on tubular steel framing with corrugated asbestos cement sheet external cladding. Internally, the units were clad with plasterboard (gypsum) with “woodwool” internal insulation.

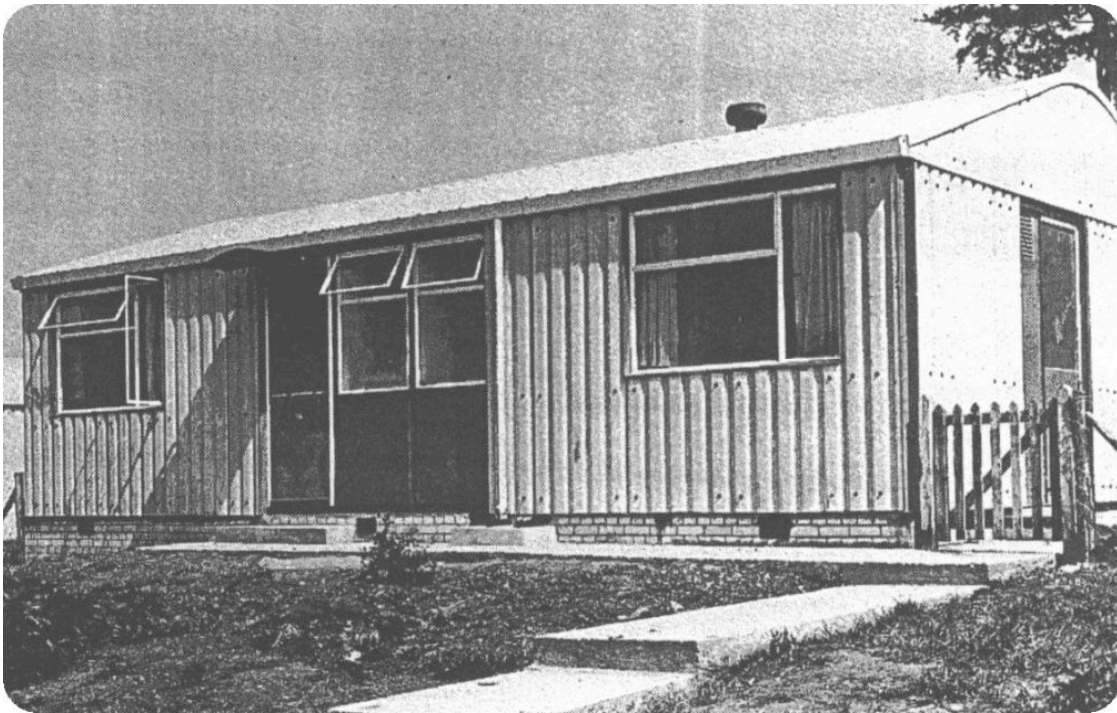


Figure 6-20. The ARCON House with steel and asbestos cement cladding. Brenda Vale. *Prefabs. The History of the UK Temporary Housing Programme*.

Tarran Bungalow

Tarran Industries, Hull, England in 1943, developed an innovative pre-formed push-up concrete bungalow.⁵⁵⁴ The push-up panels were formed from sawdust and cement to create concrete aggregate and topped out with a timber-framed roof covered with corrugated

⁵⁵¹ Brenda Vale. *Prefabs. The History of the UK Temporary Housing Programme*. Routledge, London, 1995. p.1.

⁵⁵² White, R.B. *Prefabrication. A History of its Development in Great Britain*. HMSO, London, 1965, p.140.

⁵⁵³ Vale, op. cit., p.5.

⁵⁵⁴ *ibid.*, pps.11-15.

asbestos roofing. The floorplan was later adopted for the Ministry of Works for Uni-Seco housing but Tarran built in excess of 19,000 units during the war years.⁵⁵⁵

Uni-Seco Mark 1-3

The Uni-Seco was one of the least innovative of the British Ministry of Works prefabricated houses but coming in the latter years of the war, they were desperately needed. In 1944-45, approximately, 29,000 homes were built.⁵⁵⁶ The structures were timber-framed on concrete slabs and clad externally with flat asbestos cement sheets and internally with plasterboard. Wood shavings were used for insulation, although not given their earlier sobriquet, “woodwool”.



Figure 6- 21. The timber-framed and asbestos cement-clad Uni-Seco prefabricated bungalow. Brenda Vale. *Prefabs. The History of the UK Temporary Housing Programme.*

AIROH⁵⁵⁷

As a precedent for Baldwinson’s Beaufort House, the AIROH bungalow was the most relevant British innovation of the era. The prototype was built at the Bristol Aeroplane Company (Beaufighter factory), the same firm that licensed the Australian production of the Beaufort Bomber.⁵⁵⁸ The AIROH used aluminium framing, timber floor joists, riveted aluminium external panels with interiors clad with plasterboard. Aerated concrete panels were used for insulation and corrugated asbestos cement sheets were used for roofing. A fuel

⁵⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p.2.

⁵⁵⁶ Vale, *op. cit.*, pps.9-11

⁵⁵⁷ AIROH: *Air Industries Research Organisation on Housing.*

⁵⁵⁸ Vale, *op. cit.*, p.15

stove provided ducted heating. Produced under the direction of the Ministry of Aircraft Production with a similar time frame to the Beaufort House, it was exhibited at Selfridges in 1945.⁵⁵⁹ The AIROH has been described as “that rare thing”, an authentic factory-manufactured house.⁵⁶⁰ Approximately 55,000 AIROH units were built and Davies notes their 1947 price as £1610.



Figure 6-22. The Bristol AIROH aluminium bungalow. Brenda Vale. *Prefabs. The History of the UK Temporary Housing Programme*.

The prefabricated housing concept developed by the Bristol Aeroplane Company resulted on a prototype of the AIROH (Air Industries Research Organisation on Housing) aluminium “bungalow” for exhibition adjacent to Selfridge’s department store, London, in 1945.⁵⁶¹ It is no coincidence that the AIROH aluminium bungalow was produced by the Australian Department of Aircraft Production’s Beaufort Bomber’s sister factories in Britain. There are many technical parallels between the Beaufort House and the Bristol bungalow:

1. both prefabricated houses were formed, framed and clad in metals
2. both houses were assembled as production line modules to be assembled on site
3. services such as water, waste, gas and electricity were grouped and modularised
4. standardised kitchen and bath units were used
5. standardised 3 foot grid plan were employed
6. timber floors (tongue-and-groove boards) fixed to timber joists fixed to the aluminium or steel frame
7. interiors lined with plasterboard.

⁵⁵⁹ White, op. cit., p. 146.

⁵⁶⁰ Colin Davies. *The Prefabricated Home*. Reaktion Books, 2005, p.61. Also described by Alan Powers in *Britain. Modern Architectures in History*, Reaktion Books, 2007, p.49.

⁵⁶¹ Vale, op. cit., p.15-16.

8. both designed to absorb excess manufacturing capacity in the latter stages of the 1939-45 War

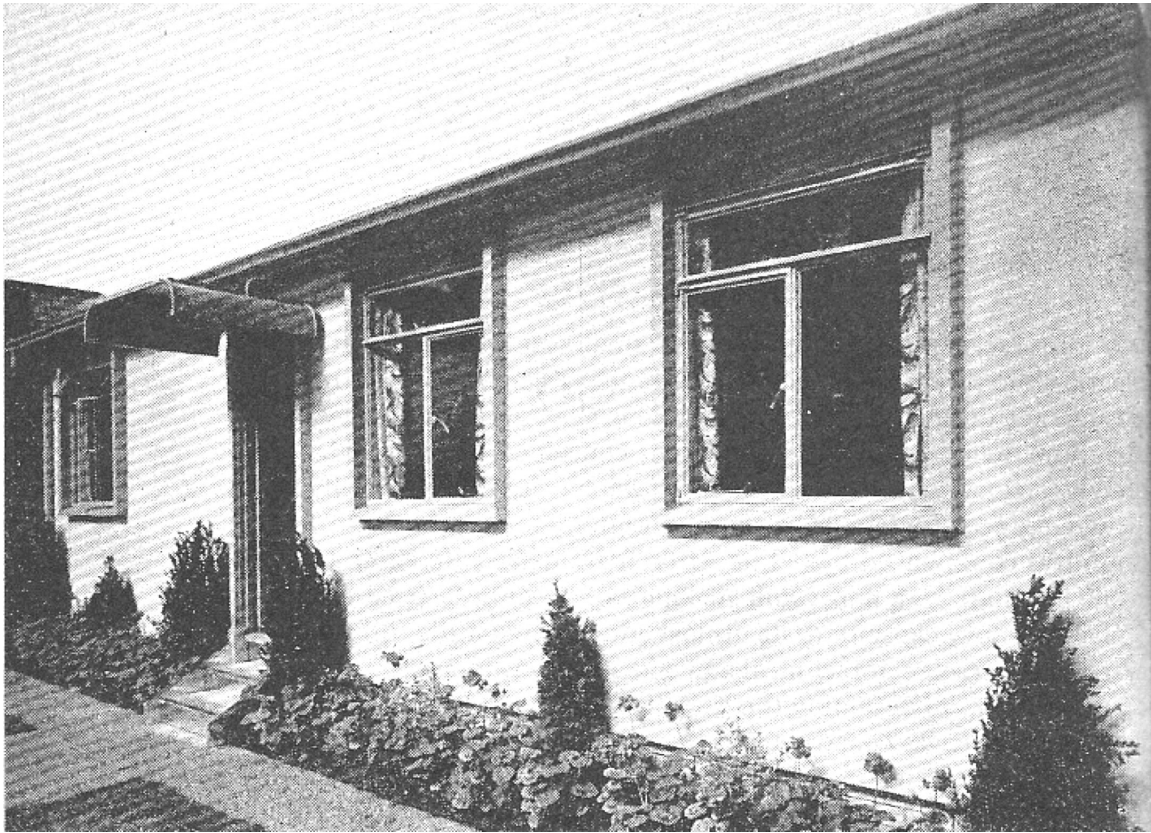


Figure 6-23. The Bristol AIROH aluminium bungalow. John Madge. *Tomorrow's Houses*, p.208.

Superficially, there are stylistic similarities in outward appearance with low gables, very shallow roof pitch, metal sheet roofing and a provisional-appearing chimney for the combustion stoves and gas heaters supplied with the units. The visual intent, however, is substantially different as the AIROH house is a “housing module” for temporary occupation for homes lost during the bombing campaigns while the Beaufort House is a modular construction for long-term use.

The shared philosophical concepts for the Bristol bungalow, the Beaufort House and the other wartime prefabricated house designs centre on the elemental methods of mechanised manufacturing: production line assembly of a prescribed set of standardised units that may be personalised through furnishings or landscaping.⁵⁶² Standardisation, of course, is a long-standing practice in the housing industry (window and door units, compressed masonry

⁵⁶² The Commonwealth Experimental Building Station, Ryde, NSW imported and erected AIROH, Seco, Tarran and Arcon prefabricated houses for “examination and technical study” in 1946. *Chapter Bulletin*, NSW RAIA, July 1946, pps.2-3.

blocks, internal and external cladding, standardised timber sizes, et cetera) but it is the intent, rather than the method that makes the wartime prefabricated house unique.

The essential difference between the Australian design and production of prefabricated houses and Britain prefabricated units is that the British structures were developed to replace housing destroyed by the German bombing raids of the Blitz. They were temporary. That is, as defined by Hugh Anthony (pseudonym) in *Houses. Permanence and Prefabrication*, a temporary house is "...taken by the [UK] Government to mean having a life of ten or fifteen years".⁵⁶³

In Australia, the Beaufort House was conceived, designed and developed as an efficient, low-priced, mass-produced housing unit for a permanent family home.⁵⁶⁴ The display and marketing of the Beaufort home stressed permanence, durability and contemporary living values.

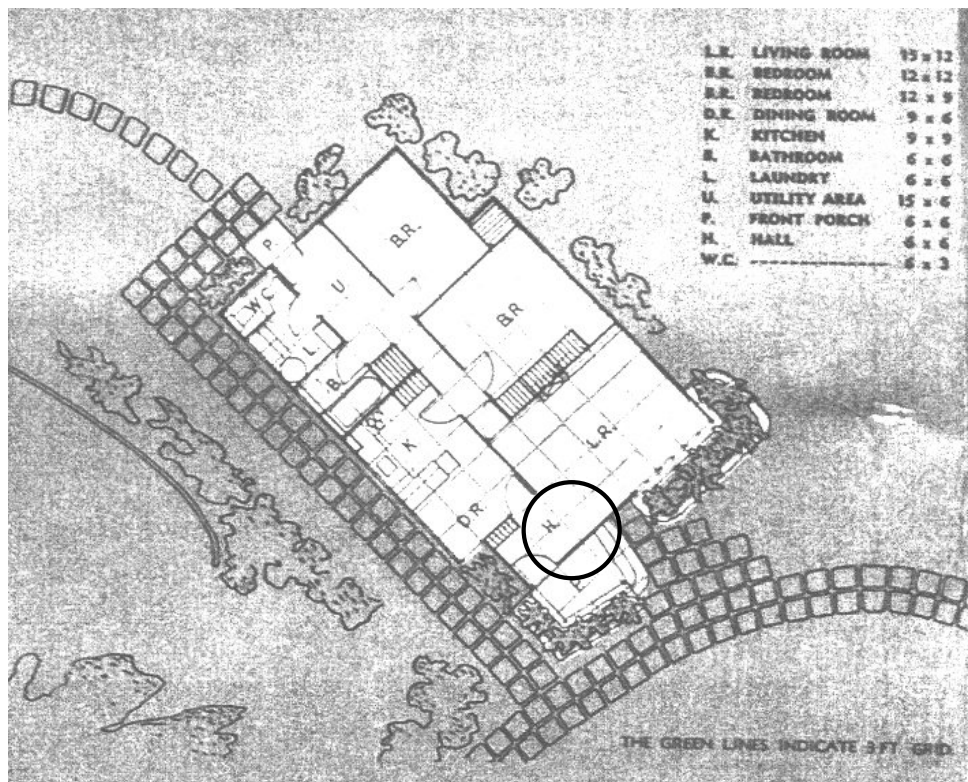


Figure 6-24. Beaufort House, Design No. 8. Floorplan. Constructed in the Treasury Gardens, Melbourne, it provides a vestibule, followed by a blade wall (circled) to separate the kitchen, dining and living room areas. Baldwinson's blade device also initiates a hallway leading to the bedrooms.

⁵⁶³ Hugh Anthony, op. cit., p.30. Due to the depressed post-war economy, many of these "temporary" houses were occupied for decades.

⁵⁶⁴ This is also true of the Myer prefabricated concrete house developed by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation (CAC). It was released about a year after the public appearance of the Beaufort House.

The photographs illustrate the extreme contrasts between the British prefabricated units and the Beaufort House. With the sole exception of the ARCON, each prefabricated unit suffers from uniform and unimaginative fenestration that underlines the “provisional” quality of each design. These houses are *ersatz* dwellings to meet the housing needs of a population suffering from aerial bombing.

By contrast, Baldwinson’s Beaufort House offers an asymmetrical window, a dramatic floor-to-ceiling corner window treatment producing a well-lighted lounge room and articulated compositions with changes in roof plans and elevations giving liveliness to the three-dimensional form. The Beaufort House is a domestic dwelling designed for an Australian suburban setting; it offers startling post-war innovations such as built-in appliances and electric hot water, duct-heating through a combustion stove and highly efficient use of space. Constructed in steel, it could satisfy the conventional housing market.

Floorplans for The AIROH and ARCON Prefabricated Houses

The respective interior plans of two British prefabricated units, the AIROH and the ARCON illustrate the economic disposition of kitchen and bathroom services to profit from grouping plumbing and electrical services. The kitchens in each case are compartmentalised while the Beaufort floor plan suggests a movement toward the open plan living. The flow of internal space is centred on the hallway in each case.

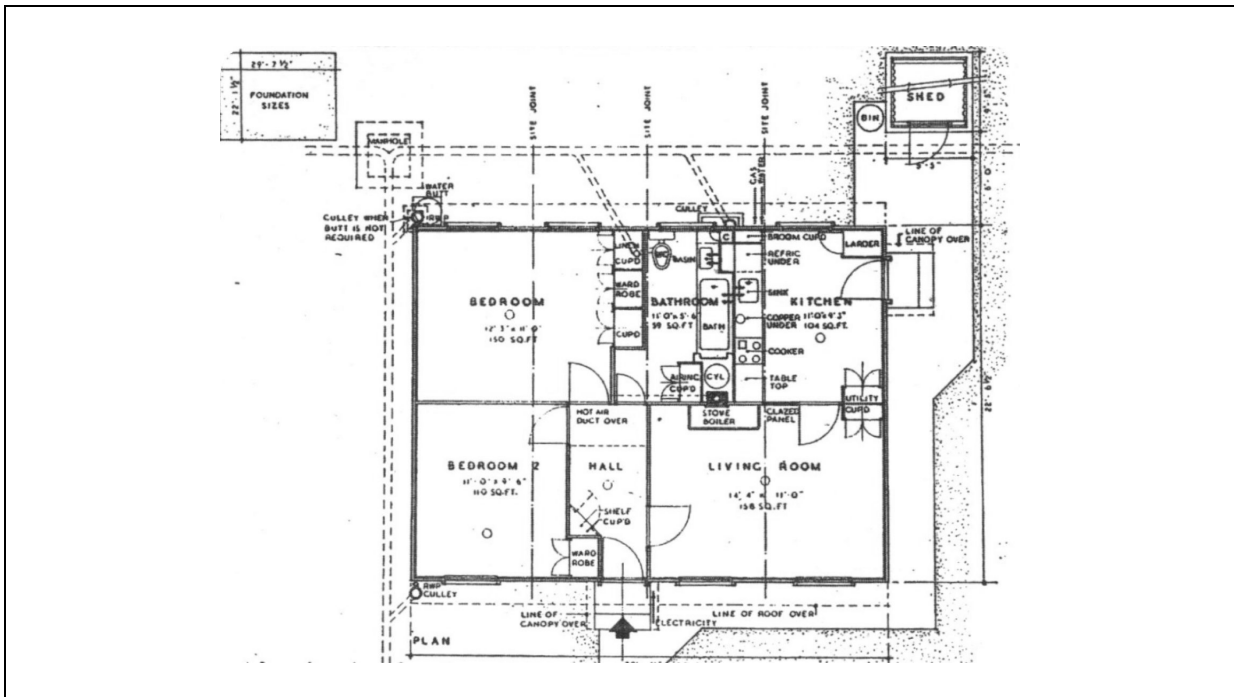


Figure 6-25. Floorplan for the AIROH aluminium house plan (1945). This plan refines an earlier Uni-Seco concept. This quartered floorplan is typical of all the British prefabricated designs and allows for the lorry delivery of four factory-assembled sections.

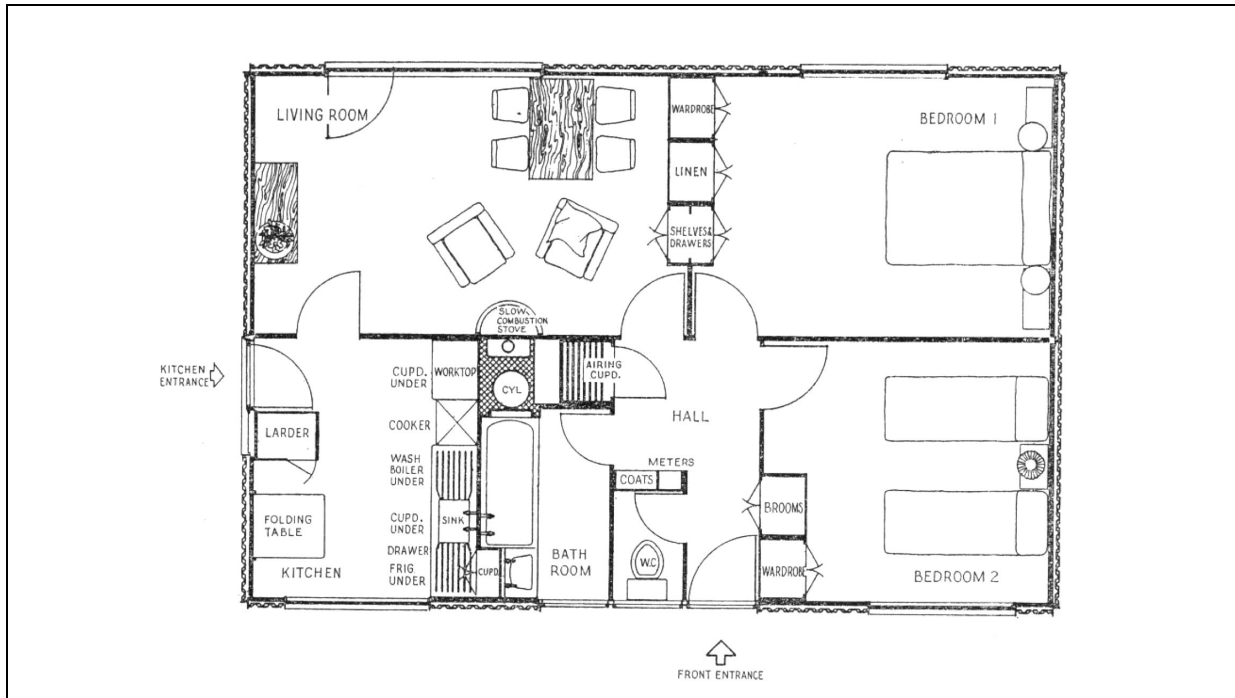


Figure 6-26. The floor plan for the ARCON house. The design groups standardised plumbing services in the kitchen and bath while the unconventional front hall entrance leads to two bedrooms as well as the living room.

Baldwinson and the Beaufort House Legacy

In the wartime design and development of the DAP's Beaufort House, Arthur Baldwinson is one of the earliest Australian proponents of the modernist "factory-made" house through his use of a manufactured three-foot modular steel unit construction, standardised appliances, electric hot water, the design of the "scientific kitchen" and in-built heating and cooling integrated within the structure. Baldwinson's earlier involvement in MARS, the Oldham and Baldwinson partnership's workers' housing project at Port Kembla and the Design for Industry reform movement demonstrated his commitment to affordable housing for Australians; the Beaufort House project provided an opportunity to advance this work.

His Beaufort work also places him within the early 20th century international dialogue on prefabricated homes summarised by contemporary authors of the era such as John Madge's 1946 discussion on the factory-made dwelling in *Tomorrow's Houses* (1946). Although there are numerous Australian examples of domestic and commercial prefabricated construction in a wide range of materials (timber, concrete, asbestos cement) before and after the 1939-45 War, Baldwinson is the first architect of his era to develop a fully demountable steel prefabricated house from concept to mass production.

Baldwinson clearly drew on the methodology of the British AIROH prefabricated aluminium house project developed by the Bristol Aeroplane Company (Beaufighter factory) for concepts such as timber floors and bolted timber joists to metal sections, the use of modular

insulating panels, in-built heating units and other elements. The elevations and floor plans for the Beaufort House were, on the other hand, radically different from the Bristol designs.



Figure 6-27. Beaufort House (Design no. 8). Pascoe Vale, Victoria, 2006.

Baldwinson also understood the Australian domestic market and designed against his modernist instincts to produce a somewhat conventional gable-fronted house constructed in an unconventional way. His design pragmatism can be contrasted to the 1945 uncompromising two-level prefabrication proposal of Frederick Romberg.⁵⁶⁵ As he wrote in 1946, “The house is planned to fit the way of living of the *average Australian family* [author’s italics], and to be capable of location in any environment and site.”⁵⁶⁶

His intentions were clearly understood by “Domus” writing in the *Australasian Handyman* in 1946. “... A home [...] must provide the answer to the man who asks, “How can I obtain a comfortable home, modern conveniences and minimum of upkeep at a price which I can afford?”⁵⁶⁷ “Domus” concludes that the Beaufort House serves its purpose: “There is no possible doubt that the Beaufort Home must play a very important part in the housing scheme in Australia. Its ease of construction, and also the possibility of simple additions makes it

⁵⁶⁵ A Frederick Romberg perspective of a resolutely modernist flat-roofed “Prefabricated Steel House for Mass Production” project from 1945 is reproduced in Edquist, *The Architecture of Migration 1938-1975* p.90.

⁵⁶⁶ Baldwinson papers, Beaufort Home, 1946, PXD 356, ff.444-501.

⁵⁶⁷ “Domus.” (C.E. Carter). “The steel house: its place in the housing scheme” *Australasian Handyman*. v.1, no. 3, Nov. 1946, p. 3-6, 8.

more desirable for those investing in a small home, which gives the opportunity of being added to as families increase.”

Prefabrication Economics, Politics and Construction Issues

The literature on prefabrication illustrates that there are a number of persistent economic, social and technical problems associated with the prefabricated housing of the 1939-45 War period in Britain. By extension, some of these problems continue to re-appear with each new generation of prefabricated housing concepts in Australia. Taken jointly, they may account for the economic failure of the wave of post-war prefabricated housing projects.

Economically, the prefabrication methodology requires a financially sheltered start-up period to allow the manufacturing processes to reach full efficiency. Prefabricated housing factories require significant investment in plant and equipment; this often leads to government involvement in loans or loan securities.⁵⁶⁸ This is especially true when prefabrication seeks to compete with an established domestic housing market. Government-insured start-ups are always subject to the vagaries of politics.

The damaging role of politics in Australian housing construction can be observed through the RAIAs' journal *Architecture's* special issue on postwar prefabrication in October/December 1950 where the journal wrote at length on the 1948 “Victorian Precut Housing Project” (known locally as “Operation Snail”). To meet perennial housing shortages, this project sought to manufacture and import timber housing in Nottingham, England from designs that met Australian building standards. The designs were developed by “Architects in Association”, Yuncken, Freeman Brothers, Griffiths and Simpson and Baxter Cox and Associates.

Described by *Architecture* as the first importation of mass-produced houses to Australia, the first “Project Snail” house was assembled with fanfare in Sunshine, Victoria on 17 February 1950.⁵⁶⁹ Some 44 variations of the design were proposed and an optimistic 940 units proposed for purchase.⁵⁷⁰ But predictably, the headline “Operation Snail a Tragedy” appeared in *The Age* five months later.⁵⁷¹

In July, *The Age* reported that orders for “Operation Snail” housing had shrunk to 700 and a controversy had arisen from the £3000 costs for the preparation and erection of the British prefabricated homes. The Beaufort House was retailing for £1850. Newspaper headlines followed. “Cabinet members also saw Victorian-built timber prefabs, supplied through the housing commission and private contractors, complete, for from £1640 to £2300. These houses, Ministers considered, were “vastly better” than “Operation Snail” homes. *The Age* also reported that the former Minister for Transport, W.S. Kent Hughes, who had arranged

⁵⁶⁸ Gilbert Herbert attributes the failure of the steel-framed house developed for the Wachsmann and Gropius prefabrication programme for the General Panel Corporation in the United States to these familiar market forces. *The Dream of the Factory-built House*, MIT Press, 1984, p.301.

⁵⁶⁹ “First house in Project Snail.” *The Age*. 17 February 1950.

⁵⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁵⁷¹ “Operation Snail” A Tragedy. *The Age*. 14 July 1950.

and commissioned the project also came in for sharp criticism by the Cabinet Ministers, “This an absolute tragedy. Surely Mr Kent Hughes saw them before he ordered them from England.”⁵⁷² This unfortunate entanglement of post-war politics and prefabricated housing parallels the demise of the Beaufort House project in Victoria some four years earlier. The political turmoil of “Operation Snail” went unreported in the architectural journals.

Adding a social dimension to the political pressures, prefabrication is often seen as “Ersatz” housing within the domestic housing market. British wartime prefabrication programmes were designed to (a) provide emergency housing to counter bombing losses and (b) to quickly establish housing for military purposes such as new industrial operations or troop housing. As a consequence, prefabrication, in the public mind, meant *temporary* housing. In Britain, the social stigma of prefabricated housing became entrenched; ultimately becoming associated with public housing programmes and the cliché of the “Council House”.

The concept of standardisation that is so vital to prefabrication also engendered public resistance as it suggested visual uniformity and social conformity. In Britain, this was an issue that concerned public commentators and architectural critics rather than the potential homeowner in wartime or post-war England. Some critics, however, reminded their readers that the perennial “Georgian” style is a much-admired product of the repetition of standardised building units.⁵⁷³ Ignoring convention in developing the domestic floor plan, almost all of the British prefabricated designs were out-of-step with their local traditions as the houses lacked the isolating central passage or hallway that was so much a part of the English 18th and 19th century interior plan.

The modernist architectural ideology of the era supported the development, design and fabrication of flat-roofed and skillion-roofed elevations that intentionally or unintentionally mimicked the vernacular traditions of a domestic “shed”. This subconsciously emphasised the “Ersatz” qualities of the prefabricated house.

Metal houses also produced a certain wariness in potential occupants. Construction in copper, steel and aluminium suffered from the physical qualities of their material. They presented problems in (1) heat transfer issues; (2) insulation; (3) condensation and (4) corrosion. These issues were consistently raised in discussions of all of the metal-based or metal-sheathed houses of the 1939-45-war period.

Collapse of the Beaufort House Project

While most authorities ascribe the demise of the Beaufort House project to post-war steel shortages, the prosaic reality is that the DAP’s Beaufort Division’s housing project was a victim of Victorian post-war politics.⁵⁷⁴ Following the Armistice in 1945, there was considerable disenchantment with the economic and social power concentrated in Canberra.

⁵⁷² *ibid.*

⁵⁷³ Hugh Anthony. “Standardisation.” In *Houses. Permanence and Prefabrication*. Pleiades, London, 1945, p.46-51. Anthony considers that the Portal House failed because of standardisation issues.

⁵⁷⁴ Steel shortages are cited in Miles Lewis, “The Portable House” in *The History and Design of the Australian House*. Robert Irving, editor, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1985, p. 288. But the materials issue appears

Coordinated Australian industrial production during the 1939-45 War had required far-reaching Commonwealth powers and when a Labor Government won the 1941 federal election against the conservative United Australian Party (UAP), the new wartime Government began to transfer control of much of Australian manufacturing to Canberra.

As the war drew to a close, the wartime Prime Minister John Curtin called a conference with Australian manufacturers in February 1945 to discuss the Labor Party's postwar plan for the economy. Curtin "...stressed the benefits that would accrue from greater government involvement in the economy. [...] The [Commonwealth factories] would supplement, rather than compete with, existing industry. Curtin appealed for the manufacturer's cooperation, claiming that the alternative was "to return to the catastrophes which accompanied the individualism of pre-war capitalism."⁵⁷⁵

When peace was declared and demobilisation began, the public were weary of the discipline of wartime after years of Government-regulated rationing and personal sacrifice. A re-vitalised conservative movement, the new Liberal Party (b.1944), led by Victorian Robert Menzies began to exploit this dissatisfaction. Menzies as the Liberal Party spokesperson also began to conjure up the demons of communism:

*The dynamic section of Labor is plainly out not for an old fashioned democratic socialism but for a syndicalist system in which industrial and business control will pass into the hands of Trades Unions and Trades Unions offices. Thrift will be penalised and the great middle class of people crushed. We should, to counter this plan, which wartime conditions are powerfully assisting, set out certain principles which will inform our own post-war programmes.*⁵⁷⁶

The Department of Aircraft Production's Beaufort Division was a Commonwealth-funded organization competing directly with the private homebuilder as well as with large Australian construction firms. Under the Liberal Party doctrine, this centralised control of production had "Syndicalist" undertones and attracted suspicion and growing anger from the increasing numbers of post-war competitors. The Beaufort House also came under fire from the architect R.B. Hamilton, a Member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly who publicly criticised the design of the Beaufort House from a position of professional authority.⁵⁷⁷

to be an example of post-war political "spin". The steel issue is repeated in "The Beaufort House. Prefabricated in Steel." *Architecture*, October-December 1950, pps. 132-133; Bruce Wright. *Cornerstone of the Capital. A History of Public Housing in Canberra*. ACT Housing, ACT Government, 2000, p.35 amongst others.

⁵⁷⁵ David Day. *John Curtin*. Harper Collins, 1999, p. 562.

⁵⁷⁶ R.G. Menzies. "Commonwealth Opposition Policy for 1942-43. July 1942. NLA, MS 4936/14/418/68. In A.W. Martin. *Robert Menzies. A Life*. Vol. 1, Melbourne University Press, 1993, p.401-402.

⁵⁷⁷ Robin Boyd. *Victorian Modern*. Architectural Students Society, RVAI, 1947, p.66.

Production Plans in Abeyance.

Until a decision is made by the State Government on the suitability of the Beaufort House to 'take up the slack' in [...] the Housing Commission's booking programme, plans for mass production of the dwelling are in abeyance. A report by the Housing Commission's engineers was being awaited by the Government and no decision would be made until this had been decided, the State Minister for Housing, Mr Barry said today.⁵⁷⁸

Figure 6-28. *The [Melbourne] Herald*. 17 June 1946. *Verbatim* excerpt of news item on the Beaufort House.

In Victoria, the role of the Victorian Housing Commission (VHC) in building new public housing aroused a great deal of anger from the Master Builders Association (MBA) and the Builders and Allied Trades Association (BATA) who opposed the diversion (real or imagined) of materials to the VHC's housing programmes and the proliferation of VHC prefabricated housing.⁵⁷⁹ After the November 1947 election deposed the Victorian Labor Party Government, the new Victorian Minister for Housing A.G. Warren, a member of the United Australia Party and Country Party Coalition, actively supported their concerns.⁵⁸⁰ The new Minister led a purge of the left-leaning members of the VHC's Board of Directors and the following year, Warren began to curtail the prefabricated housing programme.⁵⁸¹

In an uncanny series of post-war coincidences, Menzies's dire predictions of "Syndicalism" and trade union power seemed to come true in Victoria during April-May 1947.⁵⁸² The result was state-wide social and political turmoil. The following events took place during April and May in the winter of 1947: an Arbitration Award by the Conciliation Commissioner rejected by Amalgamated Engineering Unionists; Union counter offer rejected by employers of the Victorian Chamber of Manufacturers; Suburban trains on strike in April; Rationing of electricity following Yallourn power station workers' strike; Melbourne's Archbishop Mannix declares minorities are threatening Australia; Anzac Day, war hero General Blamey attacks Australian Communists during his Anzac Day address and the Victorian Labor opposition government demands the creation of a national government, relinquishing state powers to Canberra.

⁵⁷⁸ *The Herald* [Melbourne], 17 June 1946, p.5

⁵⁷⁹ Terry Burke. "Public Housing and the Community." in *New Houses for Old. Fifty Years of Public Housing in Victoria. 1938-1988*. Renate Howe, editor, Ministry of Housing and Construction, Melbourne, 1988, p.225-226.

⁵⁸⁰ A.G. Warren was Minister for Housing from 20 November 1947 until 27 June 1950.

⁵⁸¹ Founder members of the VHC's Board, Oswald Burt and Oswald Barnett were forced out. Barrett was variously described as "pink", a socialist and "fellow traveller". Renate Howe. "From Rehabilitation to Prevention, The War Years." in *New Houses for Old. Fifty Years of Public Housing in Victoria. 1938-1988*. Renate Howe, editor, Ministry of Housing and Construction, Melbourne, 1988, p. 65.

⁵⁸² A.W. Martin. *Robert Menzies. A Life*. Vol. 1, Melbourne University Press, 1993, p.64-65.

To conclude this dramatic season of unrest, the Labor Prime Minister Ben Chifley (after Curtin's death) announced on 16 August his Government's dramatic decision to nationalise Australian banks. The conservative leadership's response was immediate. In an address in Sydney, Robert Menzies said, "I want everyone here to remember that this banking proposal fits into the general pattern of coming *dictatorship* in Australia. [...] You are dealing with a man [Ben Chifley] who from the bottom of the soles of his feet believes in socialism, and means to put it into operation."⁵⁸³

L.J. Wackett, the Director of the privately-owned Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation (CAC) and the corporate manufacturer of an alternative post-war pre-fabricated home, the concrete Myer Home, describes this torrid political atmosphere in detail in his autobiography.⁵⁸⁴ The CAC's Myer Home, also supported by the Victorian Housing Commission and marketed by Myer Emporium, was also on public display in the Treasury Gardens in March 1947. Although the Myer Home was a year late into the market, it was the Beaufort Home's major prefabricated house competitor. The Victorian Government created considerable difficulties for their Myer Home. It was designed to compete directly with the Beaufort House at a price around £1850.⁵⁸⁵

In those years, [Wackett writes,] price control was in force for almost all commodities and we were forced to submit our price for the approval of the Prices Commissioner. [...] The Prices Commissioner submitted our proposal to the representatives of the building industry. After lengthy investigation we were informed that the highest price which could be approved was £1650, which clearly meant selling at a loss. We appealed for reconsideration but the Prices Commissioner would not yield. The Government of the day was hostile to big business and championed the cause of the small builder. [...] They were able to deal us a mortal blow by political action.

*We were plainly told by the State Minister for Housing [A.G. Warren] that he did not want us in the housing business which rightly belonged to the small builder. The same Minister had been instrumental in closing down a similar venture organised by the Federal Government Aircraft Factory [DAP, Beaufort Division] by denying them a supply of steel. He warned us that we would get no encouragement from him. [...] He had been advised in these actions by the organised building industry.*⁵⁸⁶

In the 1947 Spring elections, Menzies's Liberal Party in the form of the UAP/Country Party Coalition won Government in Victoria and by January 1948, the Beaufort House programme was terminated. What this closure meant to Arthur Baldwinson can only be conjectured. He had left the Beaufort Division of the DAP on July 1946 to return to Sydney to relaunch his career.

⁵⁸³ Sydney Town Hall, 25 August 1947. In A.W. Martin. *Robert Menzies. A Life*. Vol. 1, Melbourne University Press, 1993. p.71.

⁵⁸⁴ L.J. Wackett. *Aircraft Pioneer. An Autobiography*. Angus and Robertson, 1972.

⁵⁸⁵ £1850 was also the price for Canberra's Beaufort House.

⁵⁸⁶ Wackett, op. cit., p.181-182. Wackett says that the pre-fabricated Myer House was abandoned after 150 units were manufactured. Robin Boyd, in *Australia's Home* (pps.245-246) supports Wackett's view by suggesting that prefabricated housing was not a method of construction but a political ideology.

INTRODUCTION

The conclusion of the 1939-45 War meant that Baldwinson could return to his domestic architecture practice. Rather than expand his practice in Melbourne, he and Elspeth returned to Sydney as soon as possible. Forming a new partnership with the Melbourne engineer Eric Gibson, Baldwinson maintained a Sydney office as Gibson and Baldwinson while Gibson confined himself to managing the Melbourne office.

Most significantly for Baldwinson, he re-entered Sydney society through membership in the Contemporary Art Society, Sydney where he found a range of adventuresome clients from the arts community who were sympathetic to his modernist style. This group of clients led him to create some of his most consistently creative work during the Gibson and Baldwinson partnership, the series described as “the Artist’s Houses”.

Transition to Peace-time

At the time of the surrender of the Japanese on 14 August 1945, Baldwinson was deeply involved in the Beaufort prefabricated steel house programme at the Beaufort Division of the Department of Aircraft Production’s (DAP) facilities in Melbourne. The prototype Beaufort Home had its public premiere on 5 June 1946 in Melbourne’s Treasury Gardens. While Baldwinson was winding up the Beaufort House project and working with the Victorian Housing Commission on public housing plans, he was preparing to return to civilian practice by renewing his registration with the RVIA Registration Board and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in 1945.

Baldwinson began his post-war return to full-time architectural practice through dabbling with projects including speculative urban planning for the Melbourne Technical College, modest alterations and additions for private clients, *The Sun* Ideal Homes competition in Melbourne and consultant work drawing on his expertise in prefabricated housing.⁵⁸⁷ He also began to re-establish his social networks through teaching and active membership in a number of professional and artistic organizations. His intention, however, was the revival of his Sydney practice, rather than a Victorian practice.

During the transitional years with the DAP in 1944-45, Baldwinson developed an urban design scheme for one of the perennial expansion plans for a new campus for Melbourne Technical College (RMIT from 1960).⁵⁸⁸ This is the first planning project recorded in Baldwinson’s career. He was supported and encouraged by the industrialist John Storey, a senior member of the College Council. John Storey was well acquainted with Baldwinson’s

⁵⁸⁷ Baldwinson’s job files show that while working from 2 Horsburg Grove, Armadale, he supplemented his DAP work from 1945-1947 with domestic work for Victorian clients such as J.A. Stevenson (1945) John Dryce (1945), Dr Dorothea Church (1945), J. V. Malcher (1945), Ms I. Harpur Brown (1946) and John Storey (1947), the Chair of the DAP. These projects, most of them conventional alterations and additions, are listed in the of Baldwinson’s works in the appendix.

⁵⁸⁸ Urban design was a persistent issue at the RVIA. Harold Desbrowe-Anneer produced “A Plan for Melbourne” in 1919 showing urban woodland in this area. Harriet Edquist. *Harold Desbrowe-Anneer*, op. cit., p.106-107.

work; he was the Director of the Beaufort Division of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation (later the DAP).

The Minister for Education, Mr E. J. Holloway, who had proposed that Government should support the establishment of a new technical university, initiated this proposal for a new site.⁵⁸⁹ Baldwinson's sketch designs for a new campus for a technical university allowed for some 50,000 square metres of floor space. The scheme called for the relocation of the MTC on Batman Avenue on the banks of the nearby Yarra River. This area, adjacent to today's MCG, is roughly defined by the location of the new Tennis Centre complex.



Figure 7-1. Arthur Baldwinson. Proposed Yarra River site (adjacent to the Melbourne Cricket Grounds) for the Melbourne Technical College, 1944. Baldwinson papers, Melbourne Technical College Job File. MLMSS 1993, Box Y4403.

This was an unusual diversion for Baldwinson, as his training at Gordon had not included large scale urban planning although he had some exposure in Britain while working with Gropius and Maxwell Fry. While the ambitious scheme went nowhere, his designs drew two letters from George King, his early teacher and mentor at Gordon Technological Institute. The former principal at Gordon sent along a booklet from the Geelong firm of Buchan, Laird and Buchan Architects showing their designs for “Morongo”, the Presbyterian Girls College, Geelong.⁵⁹⁰ George King, of course, had been a partner in the firm when “Morongo” was

⁵⁸⁹ “Technical University Supported.” *The [Melbourne] Herald*, 18 August 1945. *The Herald* article also notes that the Victorian Trades Hall and Sir Frank Beaufort supported the move to a technical university status.

⁵⁹⁰ This firm had also employed Baldwinson's fellow Gordon graduates Max Deans and John Buchan before the 1939-45 War.

designed. King's response is typical of his pedantic personal style that former students often found burdensome.

King offered some criticisms of the strictly modernist Baldwinson scheme "I must, however be a little critical regarding the purely decorative phase." He writes. "The main court vista, quite in itself evidences my viewpoint, *vis.* the denuded nature of the trees is matted and matched with a similar denudation of architectural ornament. Every great building project should have as its focal point, an ornate and inspiring unit..."⁵⁹¹ This instructive letter was quickly followed by a letter dated the next day, 4 December 1944. "I wish you all success in your work in this direction...". Despite the support of John Storey, later Sir John Storey, the MTC proposal did not advance and Baldwinson's design for the new Batman Avenue campus was never revived.⁵⁹²

Baldwinson returned to domestic architecture in his next design competition with the Melbourne newspaper, *The Sun*. In the immediate post-war period, *The Sun News-Pictorial* revived an Ideal Homes Competition campaigning for design and direction for post-war Australian homes. This campaign was supported through editorial work as well as competitions.⁵⁹³ A revealing Gallup Poll commissioned by *The Sun* exploring the desires of Melbourne's aspiring homeowners found that:

90 percent wanted single storey homes
 84 percent preferred verandahs
 85 percent objected to the front door opening directly into the sitting room
 89 percent sought private front gardens
 76 percent asked for open fireplaces
 65 percent requested built in furniture and robes
 52 percent preferred kitchen counters to the traditional central kitchen table.⁵⁹⁴

The Sun survey suggests that the standardised features of modernist residential design such as built-in furniture and storage as well as kitchen counters were gaining acceptance. The preferences for the verandah and open fireplaces suggest the previous century.

⁵⁹¹ George King to Arthur Baldwinson, 3 December 1944. Baldwinson papers. Box Y4403 1949-1957.

⁵⁹² Storey was a major benefactor to Victorian technical education, serving on the College Council for over a decade and supporting the renovation of the building now known as Storey Hall in 1957-59. The main hall was remodeled in 1958 and reopened as Storey Hall in September 1959.

⁵⁹³ *The Sun Post-war Homes. Architects' Competition Designs. Herald and Weekly Times*. Melbourne, No date. (1945)

⁵⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 1945, p.3, also cited in T. Dingle and S. O'Hanlon. "Modernism vs. Domesticity." in *The Forgotten Fifties. Australian Historical Studies*, 109:October 1997, p.40.

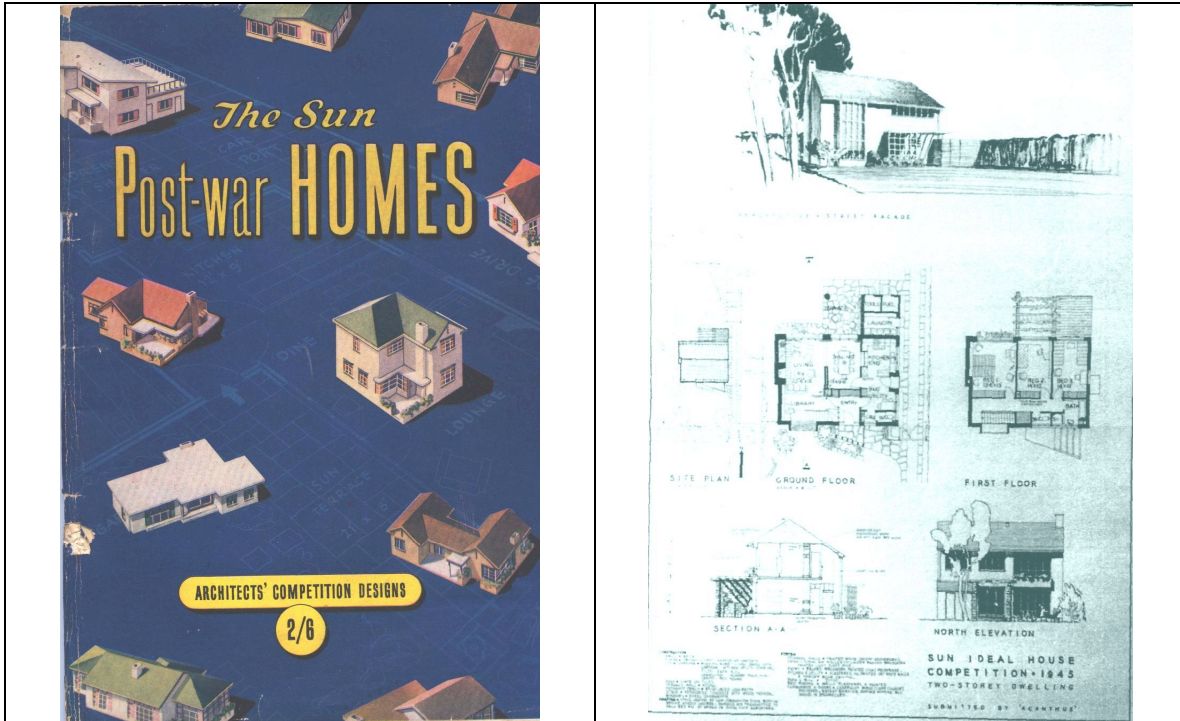


Figure 7-2. *The Sun Post-War Homes Architects' Competition Designs* publication, 1945 (left) and Arthur Baldwinson's unpublished entry in the two-level residential design category. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993. PXE 778, Vol. 4 and PXD 356, f.2321.

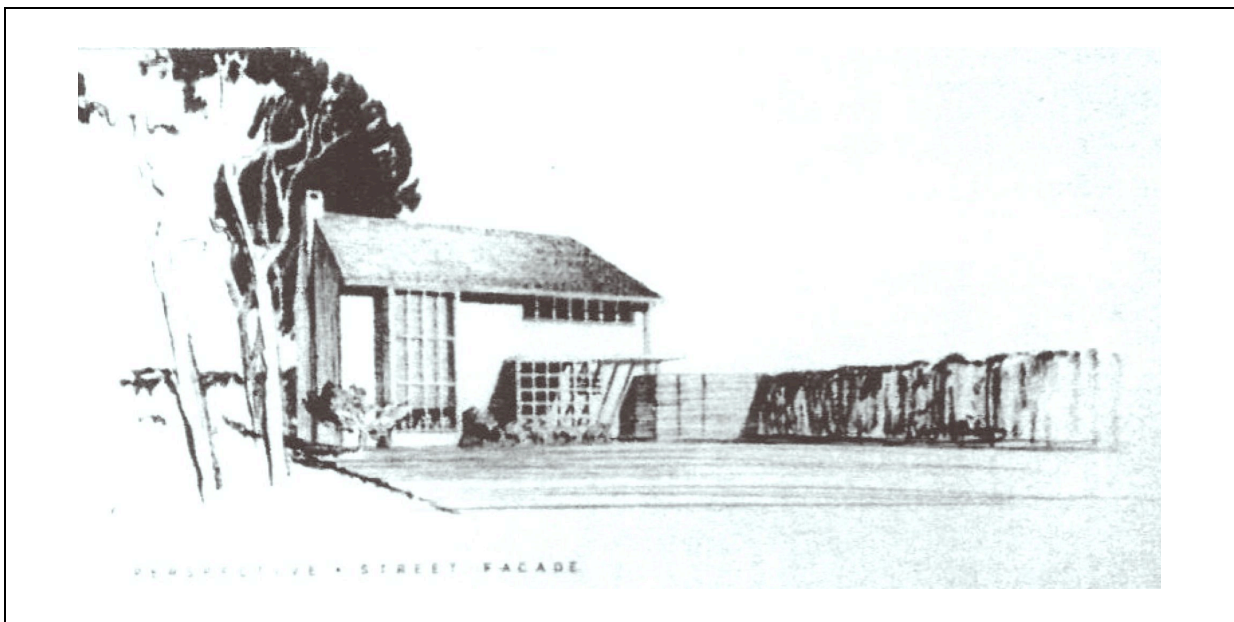


Figure 7-3. Arthur Baldwinson. Detail of Figure 7-3. "Two-storey dwelling" by "Acanthus". Unpublished detail from *The Sun Post-War Homes Architects' Competition*, 1945.

Baldwinson entered the competition under the pseudonym “Acanthus”. His steep-pitch gable-roofed entry with its monumental bay window extending over two levels was set deep into its suburban setting. Unlike his earlier modernist style, the project was adjusted to the conservative residential housing market identified by *The Sun*’s poll and the competition jury ultimately ignored the design.

It was a Baldwinson design project very much at odds with the winning entries by Jeff Harding (1st), Coxhead Bath & Mason (2nd) and the flat roof design by Noel O’Connor and Ian Turner (3rd). Amongst *The Sun*’s selections, however, were works by Robin Boyd and K. Petherbridge (flat roof), Sydney (Sidney in 1945) Ancher (flat roof), John Mockridge (flat roof), W. Gherardin (gable roof) and Dr Ernest Fooks (gable roof). Like Baldwinson’s MTC concept design, *The Sun Post-War Homes* design was returned to his plan cabinets and not seen again.

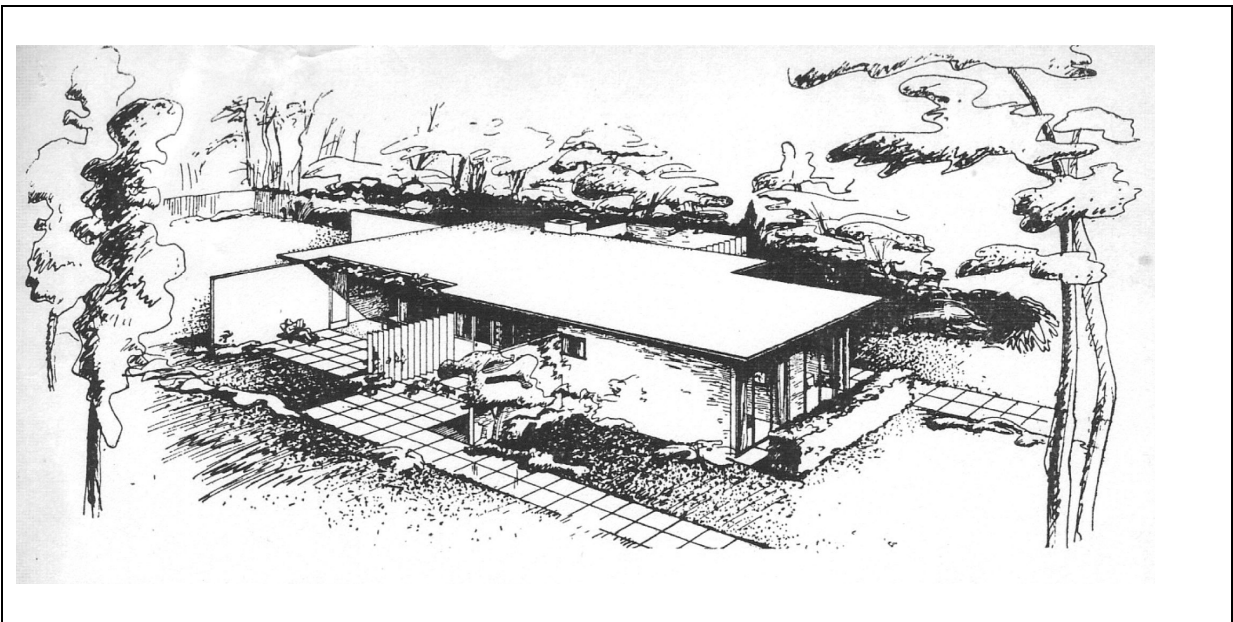


Figure 7-4. Sidney (later Sydney) Ancher. “Open Plan Suggesting Space.” in *The Sun Post-War Homes Architects’ Competition Designs* publication, 1945, p. 43.

Ancher’s description of his entry (published but not awarded) outlines some of the themes that were to appear in his post-war work. “In this design,” Ancher writes, “an attempt has been made to create as open a plan as possible. The elimination of all passageways was designed, but existing conventions proved too strong and a compromise was reached. An aesthetic expression of openness was sought by making whole sections of the walls, from floor to ceiling, of glass. While the conventional window opening may provide ample light and ventilation, the designer of this house considers that they do not assist in creating the illusion of space which is so desirable in a small house.”⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹⁵ Sidney Ancher. “Open Plan Suggesting Space.” *The Sun Post-War Homes Architects’ Competition Designs*, 1945, p. 43.

The Gibson and Baldwinson Partnership

Following his release from duties at the Department of Aircraft Production, Baldwinson was clearly anxious to re-start his architectural career in Sydney. He soon formed a partnership with an associate from the war years, E. J. L. (Eric) Gibson. The partnership of Gibson and Baldwinson is established in Melbourne on 25 July 1946 only three weeks after Baldwinson's resignation.⁵⁹⁶ Their office was registered as Gibson and Baldwinson, Civil Engineers and Architects, 465 Collins Street, Melbourne. Baldwinson returned to Sydney to establish an office in late 1946.⁵⁹⁷

Gibson's career has been summarised by Greg Holman drawing on family interviews.⁵⁹⁸ Résumés of Gibson's early employment were also found amongst the Baldwinson papers. By combining these sources, the following biographical summary seems most accurate. Eric (E. J. L.) Gibson was born in Dunedin, New Zealand in 1890 and attended Melbourne Grammar School and Melbourne University, later transferring to Stanford University, Palo Alto, California where he took a degree in engineering in 1914. He participated in the 1914-18 War and returned to Australia in 1919.⁵⁹⁹

After the 1914-18 War, Gibson was employed by the Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Company (RC&MPC Co.) in Melbourne as an Assistant Engineer. The 19th century Monier methodology was based on a patented reinforced concrete technique and Monier remains synonymous with steel-reinforced concrete. In the late 19th century, a German firm acquired the Monier patent and this reinforced concrete system was introduced to Australia through the manufacturing of Monier-reinforced pipes and aqueducts.⁶⁰⁰ Carter Gummow and Co. was the Monier contractor for the NSW Department of Public works.⁶⁰¹

The Monier system was licensed in Victoria to the RC&MPC Co. whose principals included the acclaimed military leader (and engineer), John Monash, David Mitchell (financial manager) and John Gibson (business manager), Eric Gibson's father.⁶⁰² The RC&MPC Co. was financially successful until ca.1912 when the Monier reinforced steel concrete patent expired.⁶⁰³ With the expiration of the Monier patent, a number of concrete contractors entered the field.

⁵⁹⁶ Holman, op. cit., p.136. Baldwinson's Pocket Calendar Diary for 1946 includes a notation "Leave Beaufort Division after 4 1/2 years service on 5 July 1946." Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792.

⁵⁹⁷ When Baldwinson returned to Sydney later that year, they were working as Gibson & Baldwinson, Consulting Engineers and Architects from two offices, 205 LaTrobe Street, Melbourne (tel. BW6637) and 175 Pitt Street, Sydney tel. (Centennial 1070).

⁵⁹⁸ Holman, op. cit., Interview with Eric Gibson's daughter, Mrs. W.A. Edquist, 11 September 1980, p.287-289.

⁵⁹⁹ Additional biographical information on Gibson from Dr Harriet Edquist, interview, 18 July 2005.

⁶⁰⁰ monier.com.au/Corporate/History.aspx. 8 July 2005.

⁶⁰¹ *Engineering Heritage Newsletter*, 15a: August 2004, p.4-5.

⁶⁰² John Monash. Engineering Enterprise. "Introduction of Monier Concrete to Victoria."

www.vicnet.net.au/~aholgate/jm/mainpages/monier.html. 8 July 2005.

⁶⁰³ The failure of a 1908 RC&MPC Co. tender for the State Library of Victoria's reading room dome also played a role in the downturn of the firm.

Following his initial post-war employment with the Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Company, Eric Gibson gained considerable experience in the Melbourne region and he is described as the consulting engineer on such buildings as Melbourne's Capitol Theatre, City Club Hotel, The Royal Automobile Club of Victoria headquarters, Collins House and the innovative Kooyong Lawn Tennis grandstand of 1927.

In the early 1930s, Gibson relocated to NSW where he worked for the NSW Main Roads Board, later moving to London in 1932, then on to a European and Middle Eastern tour concluding in 1934. In 1935, he joined General Motors Holden (GMH), Melbourne as "Chief Construction Engineer", moving to GMH Pagewood in 1939. He took up an engineering position with the Commonwealth Government's Department of Aircraft Production (DAP) in 1940 where he came into contact with Baldwinson. As a member of the Beaufort Division's executive, Gibson is considered to have been responsible for much of the engineering work on DAP factory construction during the 1939-45 War.⁶⁰⁴ At the Lidcombe factory, the DAP Chief Architect Baldwinson met Eric Gibson who had also taken a position there in 1940.⁶⁰⁵ Their wartime relationship remains unknown but Gibson was Baldwinson's senior by some twenty years.

Their professional relationship in the partnership appears to have remained formal. In correspondence, Baldwinson addressed him as "Mr. Gibson". It is difficult from this distance to gain a precise understanding of their professional relationship but Gibson certainly made two significant contributions to Baldwinson's career: a valuable understanding of the use of concrete in building and an introduction to commercial-scale architecture.

With his background with the RC&MPC Co. General Motors Holden, the NSW Department of Main Roads and in commercial architecture, Gibson's contacts and large-scale project abilities were significant contributions to the practice. Gibson's résumé to 1949 includes a wide range of commercial projects.⁶⁰⁶ This includes GMH, Pagewood NSW; GMH, Fishermans Bend, Victoria; GMH, Adelaide SA; Commonwealth Aircraft Factory, Lidcombe; Department of Aviation Production factories at Mascot, Fishermans Bend, Adelaide and Essendon; National Motor Springs, Alexandria NSW; Investigation and report for the Director General, Ruskin Motor Bodies (investigation of shortfall in automobile bodies delivery); Russell Manufacturing, Repco Factory, Richmond, Victoria and Pioneer Sugar Mills, Inkerman and Pioneer, Queensland.

When their partnership began, Gibson and Baldwinson continued to trade on their war experience. Baldwinson's research and production experience in the Beaufort prefabricated house project continued to attract post-war prefabrication clients. Although Baldwinson was often called upon to provide technical expertise, these consultancies ultimately did not attract commissions. The housing shortage was a significant government issue in Victoria. At the request of the Architects Panel at the Housing Commission of Victoria (HCV), Baldwinson

⁶⁰⁴ Holman, op. cit., Interview with Eric Gibson's daughter, Mrs. W.A. Edquist, 11 September 1980, p.287-289.

⁶⁰⁵ Additional biographical information on Gibson from Dr Harriet Edquist, interview on 18 July 2005.

reviewed technical specifications for “dwelling units”, the wartime euphemism for prefabricated housing in 1946.⁶⁰⁷

Later that same year, the HCV asked Gibson and Baldwinson to review the specifications for the prospective import of a Finnish prefabricated house designed by the *Puutalo Oskakeyhito* Company of Finland (*Puutalo*: timber, *Oskakeyhito*: housing).⁶⁰⁸ Gibson and Baldwinson responded with recommendations and plans for adjusting the *Puutalo Oskakeyhito* houses to local building codes but no further correspondence appears in the Baldwinson papers. There is also September 1946 correspondence with the engineering firm A.E. Godwin regarding the specifications for a Finnish prefabricated house also designed by *Puutalo Oskakeyhito* of Finland but once again, no indication of the project’s fate.⁶⁰⁹

The response to Australia’s post-war shortage of housing included the investigation of the importation of prefabricated housing. In 1947, Gibson and Baldwinson also explored the importation of the Bristol AIROH prefabricated aluminium house from Britain for a Queensland client.⁶¹⁰ The AIROH (Air Industries Research Organisation on Housing) aluminium bungalow discussed in the previous chapter had been prototyped at the Bristol Aeroplane Company in 1945 with some 55,000 “dwelling units” manufactured.⁶¹¹

The issue of the imported prefabricated houses was revived once more in 1948 for the War Service Homes project at Wentworthville NSW. Gibson and Baldwinson were asked by the Commonwealth of Australia’s Department of Works and Housing to review plans and specifications for the “Swedish Cottage type A437”. This prefabricated house project was associated with the East Asiatic Company.⁶¹² The file notes that six prefabricated houses were arriving in NSW from Sweden and Finland. Their fate is unknown and there appear to be no illustrations of these housing units within the Baldwinson papers.⁶¹³

St Mary’s Munitions Establishment

The post-war contract work continues in 1946 when Gibson and Baldwinson were invited by the engineering contractor A.E. Godwin to become involved in the development of the St Mary’s Munitions Establishment, a former defence site in Sydney’s far western suburbs near Penrith.⁶¹⁴ The St Mary’s site had been acquired by the Commonwealth for a munitions

⁶⁰⁷ Job files. 1946 (undated) Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792. Housing Commission of Victoria. The Committee included Harold Bartlett, A.C. Leith, Frank Heath, Best Overend, T. J. Buchan and J. F. D. Scarborough.

⁶⁰⁸ Job files. 1946. Correspondence with VHC 10 September 1946. *Puutalo Oskakeyhito* is also known as *Puutalo OY*. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792.

⁶⁰⁹ *ibid*.

⁶¹⁰ Pioneer Sugar Mills, Job file. 1947-50. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, Box Y4401.

⁶¹¹ Vale, *op cit.*, p.15

⁶¹² H. Huttenmeier, offices at 48 Pitt Street, Sydney.

⁶¹³ Baldwinson has an ongoing association with the East Asiatic Company (H. Huttenmeier) and carries out alterations and additions for Huttenmeier at 98 New South Head Road, Vaucluse beginning in 23 October 1949. Correspondence with East Asiatic Company. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, Box Y4404. East Asiatic has some illustrations in “Feature: Prefabrication.” *Architecture*. October-December, 1950. RAIA.

⁶¹⁴ 1946 Pocket Diary. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792. Baldwinson records that he commences work for A.E. Godwin on 15 July 1946.

factory and due to its relative isolation in the 1940s; a housing estate was designed and built for munitions employees. As the 1939-45 war was drawing to a close, this estate was re-designed by the architect and planner Walter Bunning.⁶¹⁵

The St Mary's housing estate designed by Bunning in 1945 was an early Australian example of the so-called Radburn Plan, developed in 1924 by Clarence Stein and Henry Wright for the suburb of Radburn, New Jersey. The Radburn Plan proposes a radiating network of feeder roads, narrow streets and cul-de-sacs to modulate traffic for suburban settings. The NSW Housing Commission resurrected Bunning's 1945 Radburn concept for the further subdivision of St Mary's in the 1950s.



Figure 7-5. The A.E. Godwin site at St Mary's, NSW, ca. 1948. The area retained its rural character into the 21st century. Australian Archives, No. L13416.

The extent of work performed by Gibson and Baldwinson on this site is poorly documented. In December 1946, for example, Gibson and Baldwinson submitted a building condition report on St Mary's Munitions Establishment's Munitions Building No. 1 and No 2 and some discussion of future buildings on the site appears but there is further response from A.E. Godwin or other contractors. A number of these buildings became the subject of a lease arrangement for fabric screen printers including Gilkes & Co and Colorset Printed Fabrics.⁶¹⁶ It is likely that their involvement was limited to a series of building surveys.

The Drysdale Commission

The Gibson and Baldwinson partnership began with their friendship and mutual regard in 1946 and appears to have concluded in 1950 with their relationship intact. The correspondence files in the Baldwinson papers do not elaborate on the details of their

⁶¹⁵ Peter Spearitt. "Walter Bunning." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol .13, pps.297-298.

⁶¹⁶ Some of the St Mary's leasees are discussed in Michael Lech. "The Gilkes Family, Marion Best Fabrics and early fabric printing in Australia." *Australiana*. August 2005, pps.6-11.

personal collaboration although it is clear that Gibson by training and inclination pursued commercial-scale projects while Baldwinson preferred domestic-scale commissions. It would seem that, with the exception of large commercial projects, their partnership kept two distinct practices in Sydney and Melbourne.

Their last commercial project coincided with the conclusion of their practice and provides some insight into the tone of their partnership. It also illustrates the creative tensions that arose from Baldwinson's favoured small-scale domestic commissions and Gibson's more ambitious commercial aspirations. The commission also demonstrated Baldwinson's associations with the Sydney arts community through connections with Russell Drysdale, the noted Australian painter.



Figure 7-6. Russell Drysdale. (right). Study for “The Cricketers”, ca.1949. (left), Holmes a Court Collection.

Donald Drysdale was their principal client for some alterations and additions for a Sydney home in the eastern suburbs; Donald was related to the Drysdale family of Queensland that included the well-known painter Russell. Russell Drysdale had trained under George Bell in Melbourne in the 1930s as Baldwinson was attending the Gordon. Baldwinson and Drysdale had moved to England in the early 1930s (Drysdale returned to Australia in 1940 and settled in Sydney) but there seems to be no supporting evidence for a close friendship.

The Drysdale family were prominent in the Queensland sugar cane industry. They had initiated a partnership that founded the Pioneer Sugar Mill, Brandon (north of Ayr) in 1883. By 1914, the group had built another mill in Inkerman (south of Ayr).⁶¹⁷ Other mills soon followed in at Babinda, South Johnstone, Invicta and Tully, Queensland.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁷ John Drysdale, one of the founding partners, had designed the Inkerman Sugar Mill in the 19th century and took an active role in the architectural development of the Pioneer buildings.

⁶¹⁸ Introduction. Pioneer Mill Records I, Plans, Maps and Schedules. James Cook University Library Archives.

In 1950, Pioneer Company records show major plans for expansion of the mills and an accompanying building plan.⁶¹⁹ Fortunately for Gibson and Baldwinson, their work for Drysdale coincided with the family's discussions to expand their operations.

Baldwinson wrote to Gibson in April 1948 about the potential for Pioneer Sugar Mill work.

I am rather anxious to keep this business connection with Donald Drysdale as he is a Director of two sugar mills in Queensland and had indicated that he is urging his company to replan and modernise their mills and their estates and would like us to do the work. I have arranged to show Drysdale the reports you made on other industrial projects so that he will have a clearer idea of what is required when discussing the matter with the other directors.⁶²⁰ [...] I suggest that you do not mention the sugar mills work to Billson as this is apart from the house project and has nothing to do with him.⁶²¹

On the 7th of May 1948 Baldwinson wrote to Gibson informing him that they had been engaged for the project.

Mr Drysdale telephoned me today to say that he had just returned from a meeting in Queensland with his directors and that he had been authorised to engage us to carry out architectural work in connection with re-planning two Pioneer sugar Mills and their housing. Two mills on opposite sides of the Burdekin River, near Ayr.⁶²²

Ultimately, Gibson and Baldwinson were engaged to develop the architecture for an expansion programme for their mills. Their task was to rationalise the Pioneer Sugar Mills architectural programme and provide designs for a canteen; barracks; tobacco barns; wash house; Pioneer home[s]; library; sugar mill; offices and the Pioneer school.

The polyglot nature of the architectural and planning development of the sugar mills is immediately apparent from the survey and images contained in the job files.

www.library.jcu.edu.au/specials/archives/pioneer. 5 August 2005.

⁶¹⁹ "Forecast of Financial Requirements for Expansion and Building Programmes. 22 August 1950. Item 13. Pioneer Mill Records I, Plans, Maps and Schedules. James Cook University Library Archives. www.library.jcu.edu.au/specials/archives/pioneer. 5 August 2005.

⁶²⁰ Gibson had carried a number of industrial assessments before 1948 on a number of firms including the Ruskin Motor Body Works, Melbourne, GM Holden and Standard Telephone and Cables (STC).

⁶²¹ Baldwinson to Gibson, 13 April 1948. Job file, Donald Drysdale residence. 1947-1953. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792.

⁶²² Baldwinson to Gibson, 7 May 1948. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792.



Figure 7-7. Detail of the Pioneer Sugar Mill, Brandon, Queensland, 1916. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland Collection.

This complex task, for which the brief can only be deduced from the files, required Gibson and Baldwinson to master complex agricultural issues associated with sugar cane and tobacco farming, tropical architecture, social issues associated with mill town life, the eccentricities of narrow gauge railways as well as Queensland architectural codes. While the scale of the project appears daunting, it was manageable for architects and engineers with experience in the wartime mobilisations for the Commonwealth Department of Aircraft Production. The Pioneer Mill work required considerable travel and some Gibson and Baldwinson staff remained on site during much of the project.

The work began with an extensive survey of the buildings on the two sites carried out by W.A. Edquist, a draughtsperson (and engineer-in-training) based in the firm's Melbourne office. This survey and the drawings resulting from it took some time and by mid-1949, Baldwinson was experiencing some anxiety about the extensive billings. Their Pioneer billings were in excess of £1000 per month. Internal memoranda between Baldwinson and Gibson suggest something of the dynamics of their partnership.

[Baldwinson to Gibson, 1 April 1949] The amount of our fee and expenses is certainly considerable, especially as we have not yet handed over any finished work other than the sketches for the tobacco barn and remodelling [the] kitchen of [General Manager] Ashwell's

*residence. [...] I guess that you now have your hands full of detail in connection with your overseas trip and will have little time for working on this job. I suggest that rather than wait for your departure I immediately take over the whole of [the] Pioneer work. [...] I told Drysdale that our expenses to date have amounted to something considerable but that we were well advanced with the report.*⁶²³

A week later, Gibson responded to Baldwinson's anxieties and made reference to these costs.

*[Gibson to Baldwinson, 8 April 1949] The amount of our first account for the Pioneer job was certainly a good deal more than most of our accounts, but there was nothing particularly striking about it. [...] [W]e had to make a complete survey of the mills and the estates and prepare proper plans [...] which is the first time anything of the kind has been available to the company since they started 60 years ago. [...] We will never get anywhere while we are accustomed to think of our accounts in sums of £50/-/- or so...*⁶²⁴

Although Gibson's logic is irrefutable, Baldwinson's instincts proved to be accurate. The three-volume report and survey was finished in 1949 with a survey, plan and description of every building on the two sugar mill sites. It includes photos, diagrammes and even landscape proposals.⁶²⁵ But on 21 November 1949, Baldwinson was writing to the Pioneer company secretary, "Dear Mr Davidson, we acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 14 November 1949 and note your request that, pending further instructions from your Directors, we discontinue work in connection with your company."⁶²⁶

Despite this abrupt halt to the project in 1949, Baldwinson continued to provide Pioneer with advice and plans for selected structures at the mills into the 1950s.⁶²⁷ Heavy travel expenses plagued the ambitious Gibson and Baldwinson work at the Pioneer mills.⁶²⁸ They also suffered from the lack of materials, limited building expertise in this part of North Queensland, a poorly informed client and finally, Gibson's plans for an extensive round-the-world trip in the midst of their heaviest Pioneer workload.⁶²⁹

⁶²³ Internal Memoranda. Pioneer Sugar Mills, Job File. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, Box Y4401.

⁶²⁴ *ibid.*

⁶²⁵ The two-volume report on Pioneer Sugar Mills, *Pioneer Mill*, volume 1 and *Inkerman Mill*, volume 2 are in the Baldwinson papers and constitute an important historical resource for mid-twentieth century vernacular Queensland architecture. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993.

⁶²⁶ Arthur Baldwinson to Pioneer Company Secretary, Mr Davidson. 21 November, 1949. Pioneer Sugar Mills, Job File. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, Box Y4401.

⁶²⁷ Baldwinson and Booth (a later partnership) were asked to design a single-storey office building for the Pioneer Sugar Mill in 1955. Sited on concrete pilings and clad in fibrous cement panels by rural contractors, it was designed by Pamela Jack who was working with Baldwinson in 1955 [interview 12 October 2005]. See her drawings at PXD 356, f.2506, f.2543 and job file, 1955-58, Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, Box Y4408.

⁶²⁸ Baldwinson also explored the prospects of importing a prefabricated Bristol AIROH house from Britain. Pioneer Sugar Mills, Job File. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, Box Y4401.

⁶²⁹ In 1960, Pioneer Sugar became a publicly listed company and was acquired by CSR Ltd in 1987. The Inkerman mill is now owned by CSR Ltd.

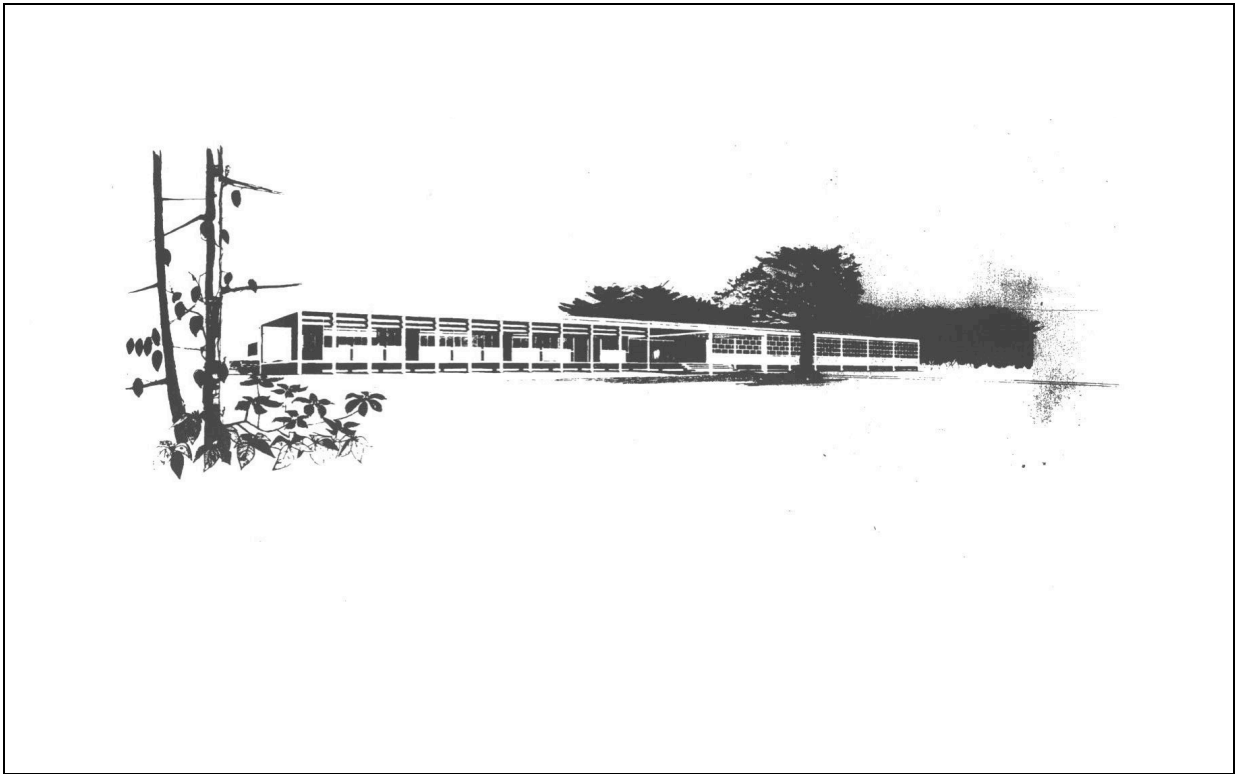


Figure 7-8. Pamela Jack, Baldwinson and Booth. Pioneer Sugar Mill Headquarters, 1955. Baldwinson papers, PXD 356, f.2480.

The Gibson and Baldwinson partnership concludes

In an uncanny parallel to the collapse of the Oldham and Baldwinson partnership for the 1937-39 planning and design work for low-cost housing in Wollongong, the Gibson and Baldwinson practice and the Queensland sugar mills planning and design project also foundered after the 1949 departure of Gibson for an extensive tour of the Americas.

As Gibson was touring biscuit factories, industrial laundries, steel fabricating shops and porcelain-firing operations in North and South America, Baldwinson was facing serious cash-flow issues in the Melbourne office. While there is no doubt that Gibson was collecting engineering data that would enrich their practice, his timing was poor.⁶³⁰

The correspondence in the job files of Gibson and Baldwinson underlines the formality of the partnership and Gibson occasionally asserted his seniority in policy matters.⁶³¹ During the 1949 absence of Gibson, “Loftus”, the Melbourne office manager is fretting over cash flow while Gibson writes enthusiastically about sandal factories in Mexico. There are no new

⁶³⁰ Gibson visited the Lustron Prefabricated Steel House programme in Columbus, Ohio and sugar mills in Cuba. Travel report by Gibson on overseas trip, 1949. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, Box Y4408.

⁶³¹ Job file, partnership of Gibson and Baldwinson. 11 Nov 1946 – Jan 1948. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993.

projects for Gibson and Baldwinson. Loftus writes to Baldwinson, “[our staff member] has nothing whatever to do [...]. There seems to be a light-hearted view of the lack of work here.”⁶³²

Within a month of the plaintive letter from Loftus, Baldwinson writes to Gibson, “...division of our staff in two states and our personal separation makes effective collaboration almost impossible. [...] These difficulties are to some extent, I feel, responsible for our small financial rewards for so much effort.”⁶³³ In mid-1950, they agree to dissolve the partnership and Baldwinson returns to private practice. The formal dissolution of the Gibson and Baldwinson partnership occurs on 13 July 1950.⁶³⁴

⁶³² Loftus to Baldwinson, 1 February 1950. Job file, partnership of Gibson and Baldwinson. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, Box Y4409.

⁶³³ Baldwinson to Gibson, 1 March 1950. Job file, partnership of Gibson and Baldwinson. 23 January 1948 to 14 June 1951. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, Box Y4409.

⁶³⁴ *ibid.*

INTRODUCTION

Following the demobilization of the military and its support industries at the conclusion of the 1939-45 War, Sydney architects slowly returned to their professions. The creative energies of the Modern Architecture Research Society (MARS) had been diffused by the war years and the social cohesion of the group was lost. The post-war interest in modernism was quickly revived, however, by the NSW RAIA highly symbolic announcement of the 1945 Sulman Award for Sydney Ancher's Poyntsfeld House, Maytone Avenue, Killara.

The 1945 award was a signal that modernism continued to be an acceptable, even desirable goal amongst the New South Wales profession. G.H.B. McDonell's earlier 1940 Sulman Award for a pre-war modernist residence in the suburb of Gordon was now bracketed by Ancher's post-war 1945 award. Contemporary accounts show that Arthur Baldwinson and Sydney Ancher were considered modernism's most accomplished practitioners by the Sydney-based architectural profession in the immediate post-war period. Ancher's 1937 Prevost House, discussed in an earlier chapter, has also been identified in the literature as amongst the region's first modernist expressions. The Sulman Award for his Poyntsfeld House in 1945 also illustrates the integration of the MARS group into the administration of the NSW RAIA. The jury in 1945 included the former members McDonell and John D. Moore.

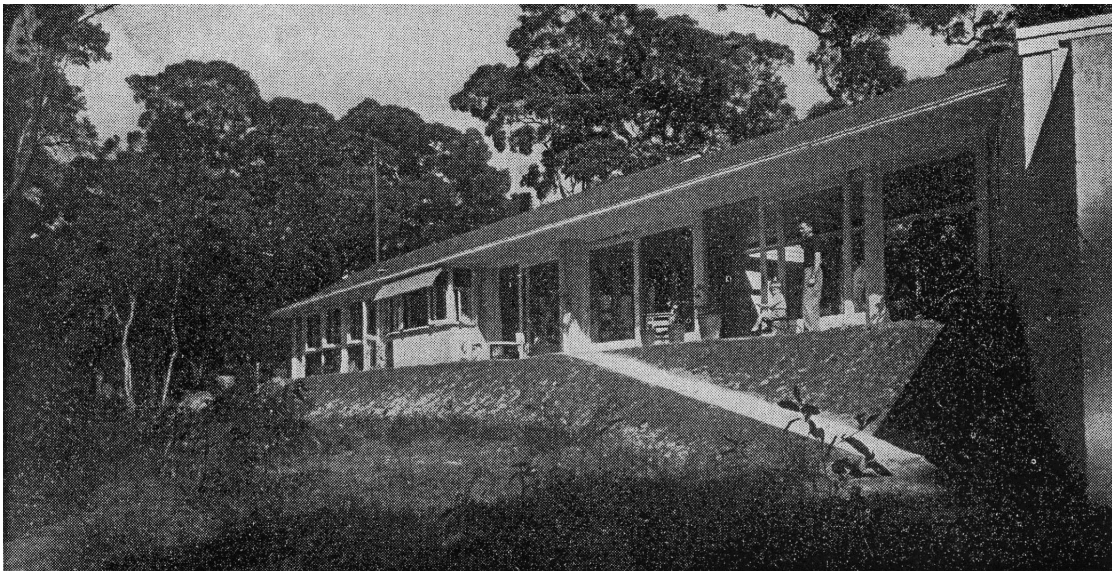


Figure 8-1. Sydney Ancher. Poyntsfeld House, Maytone Avenue, Killara, 1945. 1945 Sulman Award winner. *Australian Home Beautiful*, February 1947, p.19.

The primary Sydney modernist practitioners working in residential design during the immediate post-war period are Baldwinson, McDonell (with a surprising low profile post-1945), Ancher, Walter Bunning, Moore, and upon his arrival in Australia in 1948, Harry

Seidler.⁶³⁵ Douglas Snelling, although a prominent interior designer during this period, was studying for the NSW Board of Architects examinations from 1949-1953. Snelling joined the NSW RAI in 1953.⁶³⁶

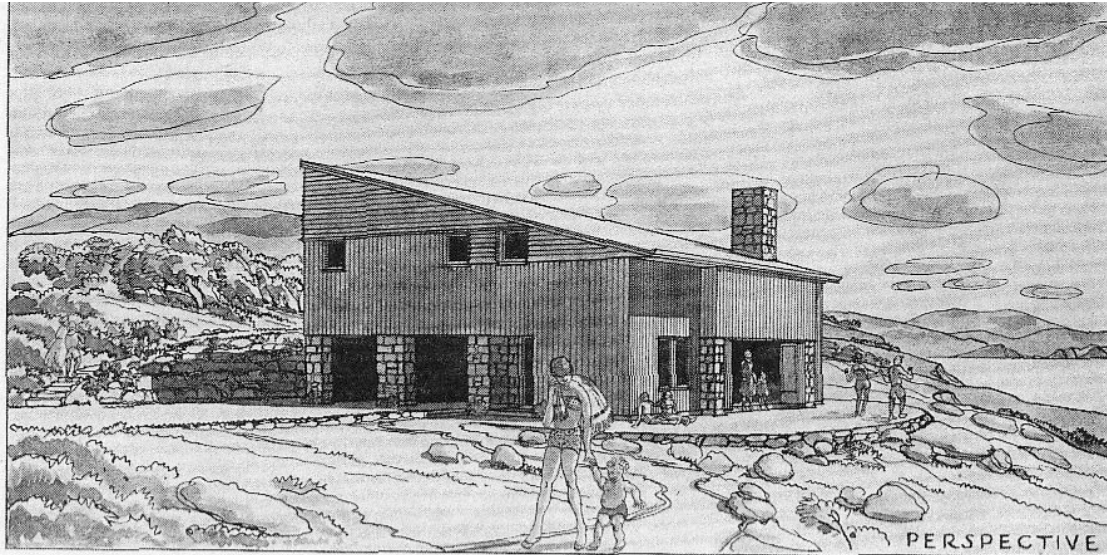


Figure 8-2. John D. Moore. “A Holiday House for the Seaside.” *Home Again*. 1944.

As partisans of modernism, many of these reforming architects wrote on this subject urging a new approach to residential architecture. The earliest local modernist into print was Sydney Anchor who wrote extensively from his international experiences in Europe during his NSW RAI scholarship in Europe in a series of essays published in *Architecture* beginning in the late 1930s. Former MARS members Moore released his prescription for residential development *Home Again!* in 1944 and Bunning published his views on planning and architecture, *Homes in the Sun* in 1945.

Baldwinson stated his modernist position through two addresses, the first, “Contemporary Trends in Architecture” was given to the Contemporary Art Society in the evening of 21 November 1947 and the second was a talk on “My Aesthetics” given to the Society of Sculptors and Associates on 9 May 1952.⁶³⁷

BALDWINSON AND MODERNISM

Baldwinson’s personal philosophy of design does not seem to have been widely published, but his articulated views share the stature of the essays of his modernist colleagues. His typewritten transcript for a 21 November 1947 address at a “Discussion Evening” at the

⁶³⁵ See the surveys by D.L. Johnson. *Australian Architecture 1901-51. Sources of Modernism*. University of Sydney Press, 1980. and George Beiers, *Houses of Australia. A Survey of Domestic Architecture*. Ure Smith, 1948 and Philip Goad. “Melbourne, Harry Seidler and the East Coast International Style.” in “The Modern House in Melbourne.” PhD Thesis, Melbourne University, 1992, pps.5/63-5/81.

⁶³⁶ Courtesy of Davina Jackson. “Douglas Snelling: Pan Pacific Adventures in Modern Design and Architecture.” “Chronology.” RMIT Graduate School of Design Research. PhD Thesis [draft], 2008, p.3.

⁶³⁷ Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792. Both addresses survive as typescripts in the Baldwinson papers.

Contemporary Art Society (CAS) survives amongst his papers.⁶³⁸ His views are further expanded in an address titled “My Aesthetics” to the Society of Sculptors and Associates in 1952.⁶³⁹

In 1947, Baldwinson’s CAS topic was “Contemporary Trends in Architecture”. “...I propose to first briefly outline the basic elements of architecture,” he said, [and] “... relate present day architecture to its historic background. The principal elements which together constitute [contemporary] architecture are Function, Structure and Appearances.” After defining these three topics for his audience, he moved on to the “New Architecture” of modernism, drawing on the title and themes (standardisation and rationalisation) of Walter Gropius’s *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus* (Faber & Faber, 1935).

Baldwinson’s typescript was prepared in point form for an address and the following excerpts are presented as prose and raise the familiar themes of modernism. He speaks of the prototypes of the “New Architecture” as addressing “Function” through “rational planning and freedom of thought resulting in asymmetrical layout and massing.” A response to climate, he said, creates an “appreciation of sunlight and out of doors, resulting in walls of glass”.

He describes the importance of “Structure” that creates “a new spatial outlook [with] an emphasis on planes, extension of visual boundaries though open framework and large windows. Mass [is] divorced from effects of gravity as buildings [are] apparently separated from and suspended above their foundations... Ribbon windows emphasise horizontal lines and flat roofs make practical asymmetrical planning and harmonise with structural lightness.” Following the lead of Gropius and the early modernists, Baldwinson emphasised the “preference for new materials such as steel, reinforced concrete and machine made parts, resulting in simple box-like [structural forms]” and their effect on “Appearances”.

In conclusion, Baldwinson summarised contemporary architecture by stressing that “... there is a conscious desire to plan for new social habits. This aspect is too extensive to not discuss as it embraces almost all human activities [...]” and most importantly for his personal methodology, Baldwinson underlined the necessity to “adapt building to its site, climate and environment. It is often impossible to repeat a design successfully on a different site [...]” He finished his talk with an expression that will come to typify his approach to domestic architecture, “Design with scientific reasoning,” he said, “but at the same time [...] temper the new forms with fantasy.”

⁶³⁸ “Contemporary Trends in Architecture.” Lecture to the Contemporary Art Society, Discussion Evening, 21 November 1947. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792.

⁶³⁹ “My Aesthetics.” Address to the Society of Sculptors and Associates, 9 May 1952. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792. Later published in *Architect and Engineer*, January 1953, p.34 (unsighted).

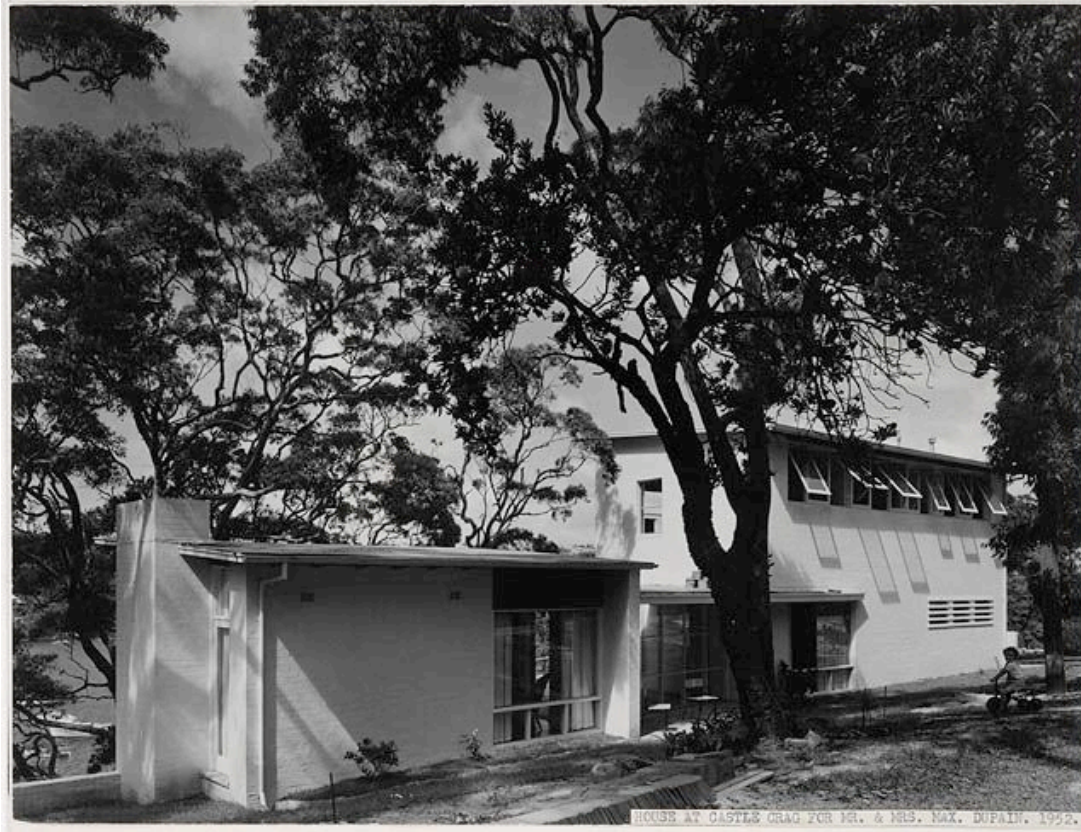


Figure 8-3. Arthur Baldwinson. The Dupain House, 1947. Photograph Max Dupain, 1952. State Library of NSW, Mitchell Library.

To summarise Baldwinson's themes for his New Architecture address in 1947, he emphasised rational planning, the need to plan for new social habits and to design with "scientific" reasoning. He identified the use of new materials such as steel, reinforced concrete and standardised building elements. Significantly, he endorsed a form of "regional" modernism by urging the adaptation of buildings to their sites, climate and environment. "It is often impossible to repeat a design successfully on a different site [...]". This is a philosophy that runs counter to the more widespread "extra-territorial" principles of modernism identified by Christopher Wilk.⁶⁴⁰

Aesthetically, Baldwinson drew on Giedion's introduction of the vocabulary of abstract painting for imagery and analogies to architecture in describing a "new spatial outlook". But unlike the mid-20th century Australian modernists who follow him, he suggested the New Architecture should "temper the new forms with fantasy". Although it was initially unclear what Baldwinson meant by "fantasy" in 1947, his comments reflected the sentiments expressed in a 1937 essay in *Country Life* by John Summerson on Erich Mendelsohn and Serge Chermayeff's Nimmo House, Chalfont, St Giles, Buckinghamshire of 1935

⁶⁴⁰ Christopher Wilk. "What was Modernism?" in *Modernism. Designing a New World*, V&A Publications, 2004, pps.14-15.

particularly in Summerson's evocations of the dualities of romanticism and science, key elements of a site-inspired "regionalism".⁶⁴¹

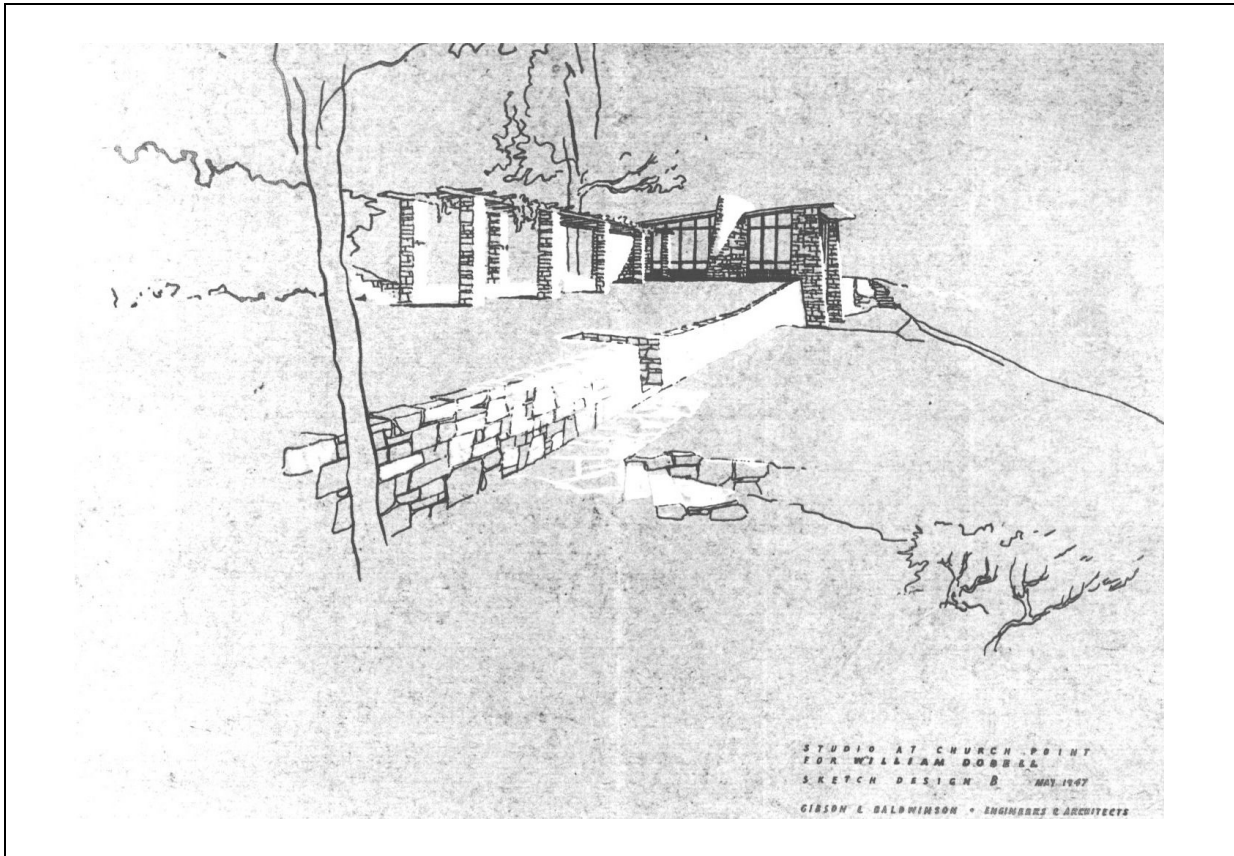


Figure 8-4. Arthur Baldwinson. Dobell House. Sketch Design B, May 1947. A design project Baldwinson describes as “Easy Romanticism”. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 1993, Box Y4407.

[...] [T]he whole design [of Nimmo House] has something about it which seems to make the extravagance worthwhile. What is it? I think it can be stated in one word, romance. Our contemporary way of living is here objectified, not as continuation of old ways, but as something really new, with a charm and adventure all of its own. [...]

The modern movement, like the Elizabethan renaissance, is essentially a romantic movement. However closely it adheres to scientific standards and however rigidly it excludes ornamentalism, its mainspring is all the time romantic and irrational. That, to my mind, is its real claim to our affection and respect.

⁶⁴¹ John Summerson. “Romance and Realities.” *Country Life*. 13 January 1937, pps.ii-iii. An excerpt is also reprinted in Alan Powers, *Chermayeff*. RIBA, 2001, p.86.

⁶⁴¹ Baldwinson’s London employer, Maxwell Fry similarly recanted in *Fine Building*, Faber and Faber, 1944, p.139. “The earliest buildings [...] were aggressive, awkward and deficient in character and delicacy...”

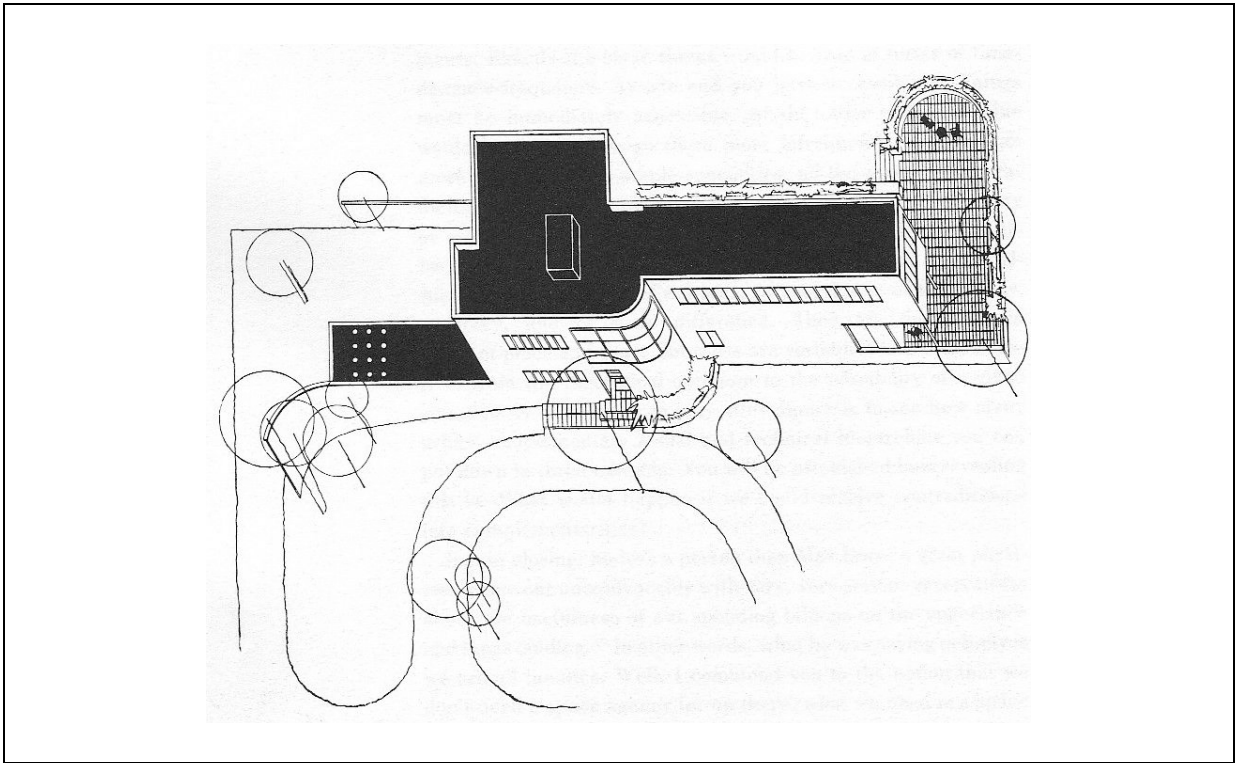


Figure 8-5 Serge Chermayeff and Erich Mendelsohn. Nimmo House, Chalfont St Giles, Buckinghamshire, 1935. *Selected Writings 1930-80 by Serge Chermayeff*, p.72.

In 1952, Baldwinson was invited to address the Society of Sculptors and Associates and this later address outlined his development as a modernist from his education at The Gordon to the present and advanced some of his modernist ideals. “My earliest training,” he began, “like almost all of the architects of my generations, was based on *Beaux Arts* methods, the study and copy of [the] Antique. We learnt to design primarily with motifs arranged according to special orders from which there was little deviation.”

Baldwinson had recanted the historicist approach during his years abroad. “On visiting England and Europe in 1932 I had my first experience of the New Architecture and quickly came to realise that the methods of adapting antique architecture to present day building types, changed social ways, new structural inventions and machine production was superficial in the extreme and only ended in futility.”

“We reacted,” he wrote, “we turned from the schooling and groped for fundamentals. We caught onto ideas such as “functionalism”, “A House is a Machine for Living In”. “Structural Truth”. These were clear-lit roads down which we hastened and they served their purpose.” But he did not find these “new ideas” satisfactory. “[T]here was barrenness, an emotional immaturity about those first designs.⁶⁴² The desire to humanise was urgent and various new idioms of expression evolved. The principal influences being social [and] economic.”

Baldwinson implicitly acknowledged the writings of Giedion when he observed “new ideas developed in other visual arts, as well as new aesthetic experiences made possible by new structural inventions.” By the mid-20th century, he was confident that modern technology in building had come to dominate the profession of architecture.

Baldwinson discussed his personal approach to architectural design by evoking “the old recipe for good architecture: ‘Commodity, Firmness and Delight’.”⁶⁴³ It is relatively easy to control function and structural problems, but the ‘Delight’ element is much more elusive. And in quest of this we come across dividing paths. I am convinced that fundamentally, architectural design must be based on rational thinking and its development tempered with passion. There must be an appropriate mood as well as an expression of individual personality. [...]”

A well-formulated methodology for modernist residential work followed and Baldwinson noted, “Our present day way of life is of tremendous importance and to the architects who are aware of this pioneer development through their architecture. It comes natural to me to design for free and informal living condition[s].”⁶⁴⁴ Having clarified the social success of modernism, he returned to the basic elements of his residential design practice. “The elements to be taken into account,” he said, “are economics; social influences; availability and suitability of materials; aspect, that is, arrangement to make the most of weather and sunlight; prospect and environment; aesthetics that temper and unify all elements of the design; [and] social influences.”

“Regarding aesthetics,” he continued, “which [...] are inseparable from all other elements, I am extremely interested in the arrangement of volume. I used to be mostly interested in the composition of mass, but lately [1952] I am finding great interest in the composition of planes in the contrast in direction and in the forming of spatial effects with simple plane surfaces.” Like many architects of his era, Baldwinson’s design work has been enhanced by the availability of larger sheets of glass allowing him to explore what he described as “ideas of exploded mass with solid opaque planes connected with, but visually separated with transparent glass planes. And the extension of plane surfaces into space.”

⁶⁴³ As mentioned earlier, usually attributed to Vitruvius but a paraphrase of Vitruvius by Sir Henry Wotton in *Elements of Architecture*, 1624.

⁶⁴⁴ From the typescript, “Today there is little importance given to social distinctions and formality in personal relationships. The lady of the house is now also the house maid and cook. Consequently labour saving equipment and convenient planning are essential. And the kitchen has been transformed and its social status promoted to something near the living room. In fact it is often incorporated in the living room.” “My Aesthetics.” Address to the Society of Sculptors and Associates, 9 May 1952. Baldwinson papers, MLMSS 7792.

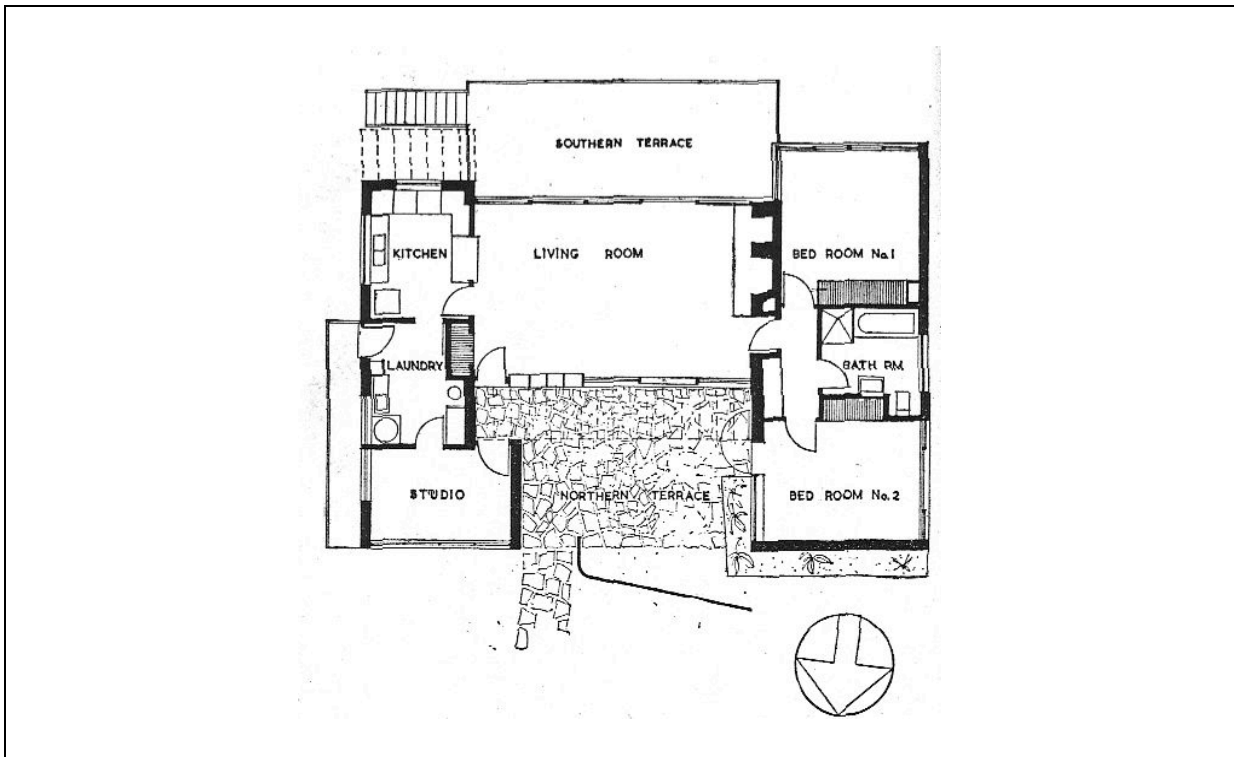


Figure 8-6. Arthur Baldwinson. Abbot House, 1951. Shillito, *60 Beach and Holiday Houses*, 1954, p.53. "... design for free and informal living condition[s]."

Baldwinson then turned to his palette of materials noting that many of these materials arose from "present day construction techniques". "Ceilings and walls are sometimes given special significance by having individual textures or colours. Effective contrast is made with a large area of glass together with a coarse texture stone wall. [...] [A] gentle harmony can be formed with a play of smooth painted planes. I have a great sympathy for the use of natural materials such as polished or even unpolished woods, stone, brick (if the colour is suitable) and materials that weather graciously."

Making reference to the 1948 publication of Le Corbusier's *Le Modulor* system of generating scale and volume, Baldwinson expressed some of his reservations regarding a pure "science" of design, "The great Le Corbusier has just produced a special scale of related dimensions in which he has faith," he said, "but the whole business is far from automatic. The character of the whole must be maintained right down through all parts to the smallest details."⁶⁴⁵

Baldwinson admitted to his audience that his residential designs are subject to forces beyond his control. "One needs perfect freedom of action or a perfectly understanding client." He concluded in a similar note to his CAS address some five years earlier. "My feelings warm most readily to work that has earthly contact," he said, "and drama rather than, to me, a remote classicism. You will gather than I approach design rationally but endeavour to realise it organically." [...]."

⁶⁴⁵ *Le Modulor* appeared in 1948 and Faber and Faber published a translation as *The Modulor* in 1954.

Baldwinson's 1952 address is consistent with the 1947 talk to the Contemporary Art Society but after five years, reservations regarding mid-20th century modernism appeared. Most notably, he suggested that early modernism was austere, a trait not to his liking. "[T]he first fruits of these new ideas were not quite satisfactory," he observed. "There was barrenness, an emotional immaturity about those first designs ...".

In a resolution of these criticisms, he suggested that his aesthetics diverge ("dividing paths") from orthodox modernism in his personal pursuit of an undefined "delight". "I am convinced," Baldwinson said, "that fundamentally, architectural design must be based on rational thinking and its development tempered with passion. There must be an appropriate mood as well as an expression of individual personality." [...] It is particularly notable that Baldwinson employs expressions such as "fantasy", "passion" (1947) and "drama". In these two addresses, Baldwinson positioned himself as an architect conversant in the principles of the New Architecture (science, reasoned methodology, systematic approach, new materials) but one who retained his desire to evoke emotion through "earthly contact", "drama" and "fantasy" rather to follow what he calls a "remote classicism".

Modernism and Sydney Ancher

Qualifying as an architect in 1929, Sydney Ancher enjoyed prominent status as a pioneering modernist. As a graduate of Sydney Technical College, Ancher received a travelling scholarship from the Board of Architects of NSW and arrived in London in 1930. Baldwinson and Ancher were acquainted and Baldwinson left for London in 1932 with Ancher's name in his diary.

Like Leighton Irwin in Melbourne and John D. Moore, Ancher travelled widely, particularly in Europe and saw German modernism first hand. When he returned to Australia in 1936, he was required to write on his European experiences as part of his scholarship requirements. Returning to England for further architectural experience in 1939 (visiting Scandinavia), he eventually published a series of essays in *Architecture* in the late 1930s. His essay, "The Evolution of Modern Architecture" summarised his view of modernism in 1939.⁶⁴⁶ Before he joined the defence forces in 1940, he worked with the architect Moore.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴⁶ Sydney Ancher. "The Evolution of Modern Architecture." *Architecture*, 1 December 1939, pps.247-249.

⁶⁴⁶ Richard E. Apperly and Peter Reynolds, "Ancher, Sydney Edward Cambrian (1904-1979)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Online Edition. 12 August 2007.

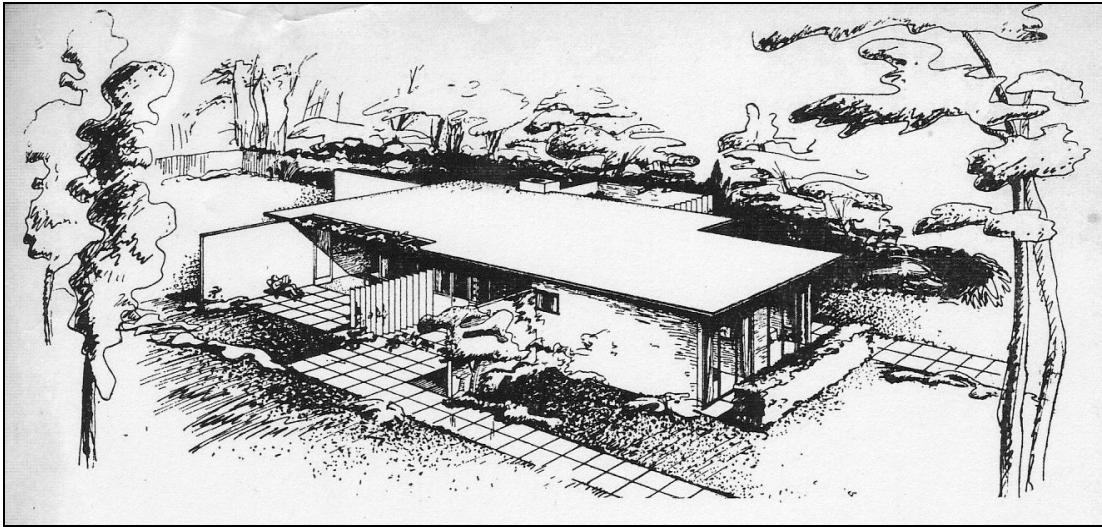


Figure 8-7. Sydney Ancher. “Open Plan Suggesting Space.” Project for *The Sun Post-War Homes Architects’ Competition Designs* publication, 1945.

Like Arthur Baldwinson, Ancher had no sympathy for architecture reflecting the style popularised by the Paris Exhibition of 1925, now commonly described as “Art Déco”. “Modern architecture has become fashionable in many countries,” he wrote, “with the result that the featuring of certain forms belonging to the early stages of the movement have distorted the fundamental truth and simplicity which are the basis of the whole movement. It was indeed a calamity for the world at large when American Architects seized on to the *arts decoratif* motifs of the Paris Exhibition of 1925 with the belief that they had found modern architecture. The colossal boom years which followed in the United States gave to the world a most deplorable heritage of bastard architecture. [Ancher had not travelled to America.] Australia has suffered disastrously through blindly and ignorantly following the American lead.”

Similar to the early writers on modernism in Australia, Ancher evoked “scientific” principles associated with modernism. This reflected his attraction to the German school of architectural modernism represented by the Bauhaus. “It might be asked why the necessity for a new aesthetic which implies a new philosophy, should arise from the needs of the day. The answer is that it arises from a fundamental historical process, the application of science to life.”

Science, for Ancher, meant “system”. “The basis of the modern aesthetic is knowledge and system, from which spring all its characteristics of clarity and exactness and its refusal to be content with what is only approximate or ill-defined.” “Outwardly,” Ancher wrote, “the expression is one of simplicity. Simplicity thus becomes a prerequisite in modern design, and there are several very particular reasons why it should.”

“One, the least important, that we are undergoing a reaction against the elaborate ornamentation of the nineteenth century, a subjective reason for simplicity which would only

have importance if the modern movement were being interpreted as a new style similar in kind to the many conflicting styles of the nineteenth century, instead of the natural outcome of a new scale of organisation.

Secondly comes the growing complication of modern existence, resulting in our being subjected to a never-ending succession of stimuli, to counteract which a negative rather than a competitive environment is essential. The exteriors and interiors of the past were designed to hold interest; those of the new movement to distribute it.

Thirdly, the effect of our greater knowledge of materials. Knowledge of materials means interest in materials for their own sake, and greater respect for them. Simple surfaces, of a nature appropriate to mechanical processes, takes the place of applied ornament, which destroys the character of the material. [...].”

Ancher asserted that the contemporary form of modernist architecture is without precedent. “[I]t is not due solely to any particular aesthetic preference,” he said, “but equally to their being the logical result of a different structural technique [...]” The unique qualities pose new problems for contemporary architecture and some of the answers are to be found in the range of new building materials such as glass, concrete and steel.

Ancher’s writings revealed his attraction to the analyses of Walter Gropius, “Structurally,” Ancher quoted Gropius, “the two principal problems for the new architecture are the dissolution of the wall and the diminution of the sizes of supporting members. The former function of walls to support as well as enclose a building has disappeared, for the weight of the structure no longer rests on them, but exclusively on a slender reinforced concrete or steel skeleton.” [...] “The walls,” Ancher said, “which formerly enclosed and supported the building, are no longer the dominating part of the structure.”

While in London during his second European visit in 1939, Ancher attended four lectures given by Frank Lloyd Wright and introduced some of Wright’s “organic” philosophy into his essays [but not in Ancher’s architecture] on his return to Australia in late 1939.⁶⁴⁸ To achieve the integrated effects of organic architecture, Ancher stressed the importance of training for the architect. “A building based on the principles of the New Architecture, whether it is an office, a place of entertainment, a school, or a dwelling can be likened to an organism. Each component part must bear a direct relation to every other part of the whole, and, like a living organism, there must be a harmonious working together of all the separate parts. [...] But these effects [...] are the result of the training and culture of the designer concerned and his attitude. Their apparent simplicity is misleading, for this is arrived at through the power of restraint.” [...]

⁶⁴⁸ Ancher’s London tour corresponded with Wright’s four lectures at the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1939 for The Sir George Watson lectures of the Sulgrave Manor Board on “An Organic Architecture, the Architecture of Democracy”. “So here I stand before you preaching organic architecture: declaring organic architecture to be the modern ideal [...]. Nor cherishing any preconceived form fixing upon us either past, present or future, but [...] exalting the simple laws of common sense [...] determining form by way of the nature of materials...”. Lund, Humphries & Co., Ltd., 1941.

Modernism and John D. Moore's *Home Again*

Writing while Australia was in the grip of a world war, Moore's 1944 book addressed the potential returning defence force and summarised his view of modernism.⁶⁴⁹ "What we now call the modern movement started," he wrote, "slowly at first, developing greater speed after the Great War. It is temporarily arrested now by the World War as far as its actual building activities are concerned, but it is tremendously revitalised and stimulated in its spirit by the enormous urge of man to plan a better world to live in."

Moore was born in 1888 and had seen service in "The Great War". The architect had also travelled extensively and worked in the offices of Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue in New York City in 1914-15.⁶⁵⁰ Moore and his practice, Wardell, Moore & Dowling, had won a Sulman Award in 1937 for an Italianate classroom building at the exclusive girls' school Frensham in Mittagong. Like Baldwinson and Bunning, he spoke extensively on architecture and planning issues.⁶⁵¹

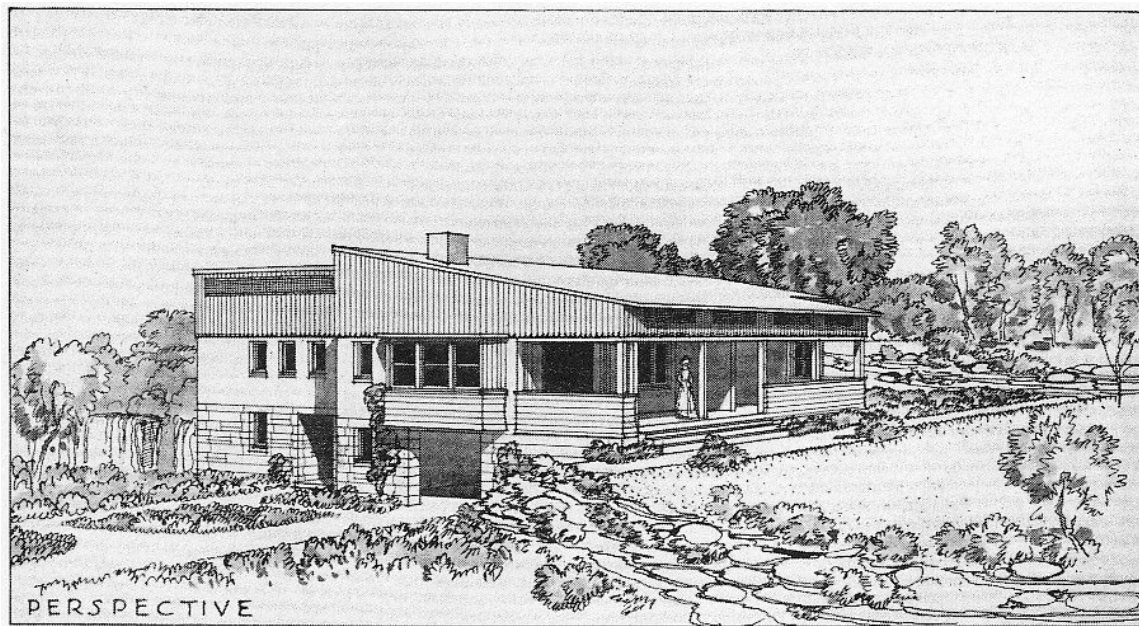


Figure 8-8. John D. Moore. "A Family Home." *Home Again*. 1944.

Theoretically, Moore was opposed to historicism. "[...] [W]e can look forward with confidence to [modernism's] contribution to the future", he writes. "Why? Because of its re-discovery of the principles of true building. What are these? Simply this: to accept a building problem for what it is, house, church, factory, or railway station. To understand thoroughly in all detail what activity or non-activity man and machine are expected to carry on in that building." Moore continued. "So design and arrange the structure that it will best suit its

⁶⁴⁹ John D. Moore. *Home Again*. Ure Smith, 1944, pps.34-35

⁶⁵⁰ Cedric Flower, "Moore, John Drummond Macpherson (1888-1958)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Online Edition. 17 August 2007.

⁶⁵¹ His son, David Moore, was a noted photographer.

purpose and carry on the function expected of it, under the best conditions for the man and machine using it. [...]

Unlike Ancher, Moore's view of modernism was shaped toward regional solutions. The necessity for adapting international modernism principles to regional considerations was essential and he employed some of his strongest language to argue for an "Australian" architecture. "[T]o transplant the appearance of such a [flat-roofed and box-formed] building to some other and different country and people is false and cannot truly be called modern. In this case it becomes a sham and its designer is merely an imitator."

"Now if you were to take the true designer of one country and transplant him to another and dissimilar country, he, by applying the principles of true building which he had used in his own land, will produce a truly modern building in the land of his adoption. His flat roof may become a pitched one, his large area of glass become smaller and his box-like wall shapes become flowing curved surfaces, or he may arrive at the conclusion that straight lines are superior to curves."

While sympathetic to new materials such as concrete and glass, Moore considered that extensive glazing areas or curtain walls were inappropriate for the nation's climate. "Now take the case of the modern house in Australia and consider the question of the large areas of glass-walling seen in some European and American examples. These were no doubt included to produce a feeling of extra spaciousness, to include a good prospect, and to admit a maximum amount of light and sun into the rooms." [...] Moore's strong views on modernist glazing practices led him to prepare detailed practical arguments against it, even stressing the demands of window-cleaning.

"It can be assumed in the localities in which these large areas of glass were used that extra spaciousness was necessary, that the prospect was good and worth including, and that the admission of the maximum amount of light and sun desirable, also that the questions of the extra structural costs involved [and] the labour necessary to clean the glass..."

The flat roof was one of residential modernism's most contentious issues in the early decades of Australian modernism.⁶⁵² Moore was concerned that the uncritical adoption of the flat roof was inappropriate for the nation. "Now take the case of the flat roof for Australian houses," he wrote. "Can the normal Australian afford to pay for this, as it should be built? Our climate of excessive heat and sharp sudden changes of cool weather, of extreme dryness and heavy downpour demands that materials of different natures should be used and great care expended in the construction of this feature if we are to prevent heat and water penetration. Again, a question arises-will flat roofs contribute to the function and comfort of the normal Australian house?"

On the other hand, Moore favoured conventional elevations and massing. "This leaves us," he wrote, "with the square box-like wall shapes. Because they grow mainly out of straight unworried walls they are most economical and satisfactory from whichever way the problem is approached, except perhaps in some isolated cases where a greater value and effect may be

⁶⁵² Flat roofs are reported in Australia in the first decade of the 20th century.

achieved by adopting the curve. [...] I think there can be no question that the general adoption of box-like wall shapes in Australia is desirable for the normal house.”

In *Home Again*, Moore argued for a carefully considered use of the international modernist style in Australia concluding that “I believe we should design and build simply and faithfully, keeping to the problem in hand and working strictly within its limits; using the large areas of glass, not because they are an overseas feature, but strictly to satisfy a distinct want in a definite position planning the room and garden arrangements to suit our needs best, and seeing that the sections and elevations grow naturally out of the room plan; using the most suitable and available building materials and taking full advantage of what science has given and can give us in our use of the most efficient and appropriate fittings. We should take due regard and notice of the geographical nature of the building site [...].”

Moore’s strongest arguments were directed toward developing regional solutions for residential buildings. He offered little or no support to the work of International Modernism. “We should not be stampeded into imagining that conditioned air and total sound insulation are vital factors in our domestic lives until we have solved other and more fundamental factors [...]. If all this can be done then the normal Australian house will stand a very big chance of fulfilling its true function for the normal Australian, and in time as his conditions change and he develops, so will his house come to express these things, and will take its place in a national architecture comparable with that of other lands, and be not as it is at present—largely the imitation of other nations’ houses, a transplanting of their appearances to Australia.”

Modernism and Walter Bunning’s *Homes in the Sun*

Similar in its intended audience to John D. Moore’s 1944 book, Bunning was also a spokesperson for modernism and planning in the immediate post-war period with his 1945 *Homes in the Sun*.⁶⁵³ In this work, Bunning revisited some of the themes that he outlined in his 1944 Commonwealth Housing Commission report for the Commonwealth Government and directly addressed Australia’s returning soldiers.⁶⁵⁴

Bunning had traveled in Britain with a Board of Architects NSW scholarship and studied planning while resident in London. After the 1939-45 War, he formed a partnership with C.A. Madden working as Bunning and Madden. Much of their work was of a commercial scale in a modernist style (including Canberra’s National Library) and in 1949, he and Madden won the competition to construct ANZAC House, College Street, Sydney, an early award-winning curtain wall building.⁶⁵⁵ He had very few residential commissions and later in life, devoted much of his career to regional planning.

⁶⁵³ Walter Bunning, *Homes in the Sun*. W.J. Nesbitt, 1945.

⁶⁵⁴ Commonwealth Housing Commission. Final Report, 25 August 1944. The document calls for Commonwealth assumption of housing standards, regional and national planning, industrial regulation, etc. This “Federalist” approach was rejected in a 1944 national referendum.

⁶⁵⁵ Peter Spearritt, “Walter Ralston Bunning, (1912-1977)”, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 13, Melbourne University Press, 1993, pps.297-298.

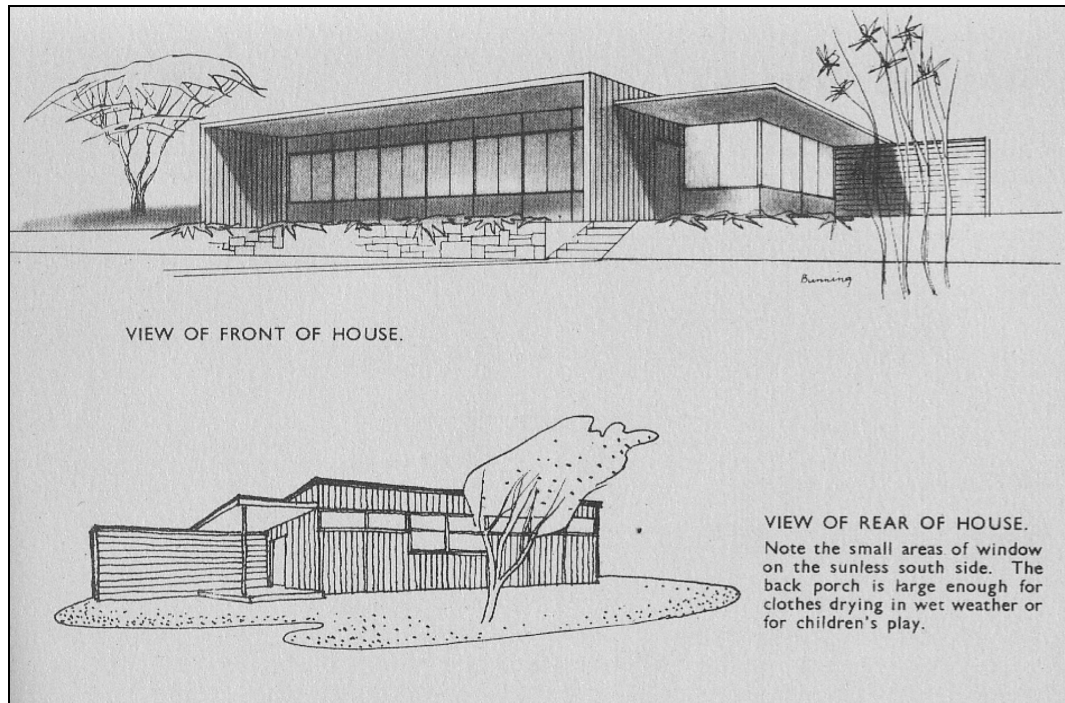


Figure 8-9. Walter Bunning. The “Solar House”, *Homes in the Sun*, 1945.

Consistent with the modernists of his era, Bunning was concerned to encourage the use of industrial processes into architectural construction. In a section called, “How shall we build?”, Bunning promoted the adoption of machine production shaped by scientific study. He considered the use of corrugated steel sheeting as a particularly Australian example of machine production of building materials. “The machine is only another sort of tool,” he wrote, “and is capable of providing more accurate shapes than hand tools and much more quickly (and therefore in greater quantities). With scientific knowledge behind it, the machine can produce an immensely wide variety of materials. We have already seen the revolution which galvanised iron [steel] produced in Australia. With modern transport, these materials are easily made available in any part of the country.”⁶⁵⁶

The Victorian Housing Commission’s (VHC) programme received Bunning’s support for the for the Fowler Concrete Construction prefabrication method and he emphasised the importance of standardisation in the process. He also realised that more efficient construction methods were essential. “Not only does the machine produce new materials and changing appearances but it also gives rise to new methods of assembling materials. [...] Gradually there has been a change towards standardisation of parts, which are made in a factory. Stoves, baths, windows, doors, cupboards come ready-made to the site to be merely built in. In other countries much bigger units such as walls, floors, roofs and fireplaces have been built in factories. This prefabrication has not played a large part in Australian building so far. [...] But it is highly probable...”⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵⁶ Walter Bunning. *Homes in the Sun*. W.J. Nesbitt, 1945, p.65-66.

⁶⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p.65-66.

Bunning was enthusiastic about the use of any alternative materials in residential housing. Following closely the international wartime developments, he noted that “Steel and aluminium houses predominate in America, whereas timber and light aerated concrete is used for housing in Scandinavian countries and Germany. The post-war shortage of timber in Australia may well result in the steel or concrete house proving the satisfactory solution.”[...]

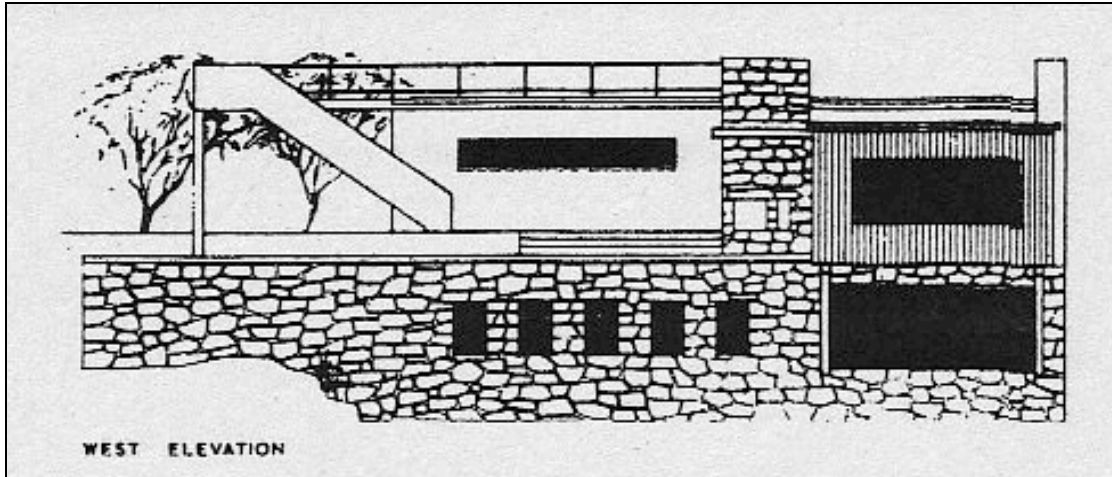


Figure 8-10. Bunning and Madden. Quakers Hat Bay House, West elevation, 1952. *Architecture*. April-June 1954.

“Experiments with concrete, aerated and vacuum dried, and with a mixture of cement and waste products from furnaces and saw-mills are being tried in other countries. [...] Large-scale production is necessary for prefabricated methods to be financially and economically successful. Even if fully prefabricated houses, including the factory manufacture of wall, roof, floor, fireplace and all other units, are not achieved, it is quite clear that mass-production of many standardised parts of a house will be a major factor in reducing costs.” Illustrating his awareness of the robust debate surrounding prefabricated housing in the United Kingdom, Bunning addressed this issue by assuring his readers that “It is also clear that, provided the basic units are well designed, the public need have no fear of having monotonous rows of houses foisted upon them.” [...] ⁶⁵⁸

In 1945, mirroring the message of *Homes in the Sun*, the MARS group, with John Oldham as the new president released an 18-page booklet *Post-war Home* that also contained a more concise summary of Bunning’s thoughts on community planning, along with recommendations for a scientific approach to the plan, the development of mass production and prefabrication of housing and the adoption of the flat in inner city areas drawn from *Homes in the Sun*. Bunning’s observations were accompanied by similar summaries by fellow MARS members Hedley Carr and Hal Salvage. ⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁸ Walter Bunning, op. cit., p.66.

⁶⁵⁹ Modern Architecture Research Society. *Post-war Home*, Australian Gas Light Company, 1945. Contributors were Hal Salvage, Hedley Carr, Walter Bunning, John Oldham.

Modernism and Harry Seidler

Seidler's press coverage since he began his private practice in Australia in 1948 was intense and unrelenting.⁶⁶⁰ The Sulman Award for his Rose Seidler House in 1951 had provided him with a forum as a spokesperson for modernism in post-war Australia and he was considered within much of the architectural profession (and the popular media) to have introduced the "Bauhaus principles of Gropius, Breuer and Albers into Australia".⁶⁶¹ As he had studied and/or worked with these notable figures, his peers and the public considered his modernist approach to design to be authentic and authoritative.

Seidler's essay, "Painting into Architecture" published in the Australian journal *Architecture* in October 1949 established his local credentials as a Gropius-trained Harvard Graduate School of Design graduate. Seidler drew heavily from Sigfried Giedion's 1938-39 lectures as Charles Eliot Norton Professor at Harvard University, listed as "Space, Time and Architecture", and later published under the same title in 1941 by the Harvard University Press. Seidler, like Giedion, considered the innovations of modernist architecture to be extensions of the visual advances made by early 20th century painters.⁶⁶²

Walter Gropius' book *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus* was published in a Faber & Faber English edition in 1935 and, like Ancher in 1939, the views of Gropius (as a writer and teacher) also inform Seidler's 1949 article in *Architecture*. "The powerful forces of our new architecture have been exerting themselves in the world for several decades now," Seidler writes. Following the outline of *The New Architecture*, he complains, as Gropius had done in 1935, of architecture's confused modernist theories.⁶⁶³ "We know modern architecture is here to stay and yet it is rather sad proof of the disintegrated state of the cultural forces, that the understanding, development and acceptance of many of its theories have been at best sporadic." [...] "This visual revolution [of modernism], equally applicable to architecture as to the other visual arts, is generally minimised amongst architects themselves, to over-stress the significance of functionalism. Buildings of great periods of the past have served their purpose perfectly." [...]

Seidler considered that cool, rational logic of planning informed the "New Architecture". "The delight of the re-birth of rational thought in building is undoubtedly the reason why logic is commonly considered the new basis for architecture. [...] It remains to be shown how all the arts to-day, including genuine modern architecture, are proving that the elements of this vision are manifestations common to all of them."

While Ancher had written on "scientific" method applied to architectural design, Seidler's essay, as well as his own buildings paid generous homage to the science of the engineering

⁶⁶⁰ Michael Bogle. "Modernism and the Media." Conference Papers of the Society of Architectural Historians, ANZ. "Early Modernist Architecture in Australia." September 1993, Perth, WA.

⁶⁶¹ Ann Stephen, et al. *Modernism in Australia*. 2007, pps.603-611.

⁶⁶² Harry Seidler. "Painting into Architecture." *Architecture*. October 1949, pps.119-124. Reprinted in Ann Stephens, et al. *Modernism in Australia*. pps.603-611.

⁶⁶³ Gropius writes "...functionalism and 'fitness for purpose' had had the effect of deflecting appreciation of the new architecture into external channels...". Walter Gropius. *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus*. Faber & Faber, 1935, p.23.

profession. “The new visual effects in building, obviously of a rational origin, are those which are an outcome of new engineering practice. Structural engineering, one of the many very progressive branches of modern technology has been the prime cause for our revolution in building. Responsible above all is the development of materials which made possible the principle of skeleton construction with all its implications. [...]”.

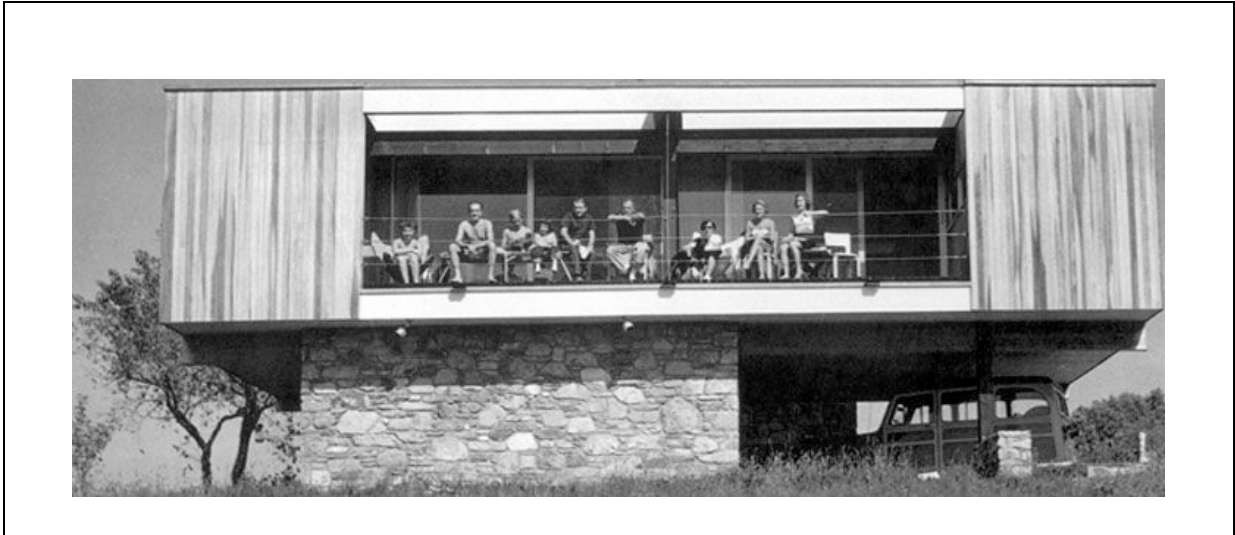


Figure 8-11. Marcel Breuer. The Wolfson House, New York, 1949. www.breuertrailerhouse.com.

Canvassing issues that Baldwinson had addressed in his lecture to the CAS some two years previously, Seidler writes of the innovations of engineering and their effect on building form. “The familiar horizontal modulation of elements basically opposes gravity and the placement of large masses building on visually negligible supports violates the traditional eye. Cantilevered slabs hovering in mid-air seem to negate the fact that mass is something solid and heavy. Structural engineering [...] has made possible a complete dissolution of the conventional architecture of mass, with its earth bound wall-bearing structural systems. It has paved the way for our present-day architecture of space.”

Seidler asserts that the answer to the architectural world’s dilemma, the reliance on historical styles and the new structural possibilities, were “crying out for a new aesthetic” “The answer,” he says, “came from the world of painting.” This was also one of the principal themes of Giedion’s Harvard University lectures of 1938-39.

Giedion proposed “Modern painters have enlarged our visual experience by working with relations between objects which we have never taken cognizance of in our ordinary, half-automatic seeing. Contemporary architects have been just as willing to anticipate public understanding. They have had to wait until they could be sure of universal approbation for

their work. Following an impulse which was half ethical, half artistic, they have sought to provide our life with its corresponding shell or framework.”⁶⁶⁴

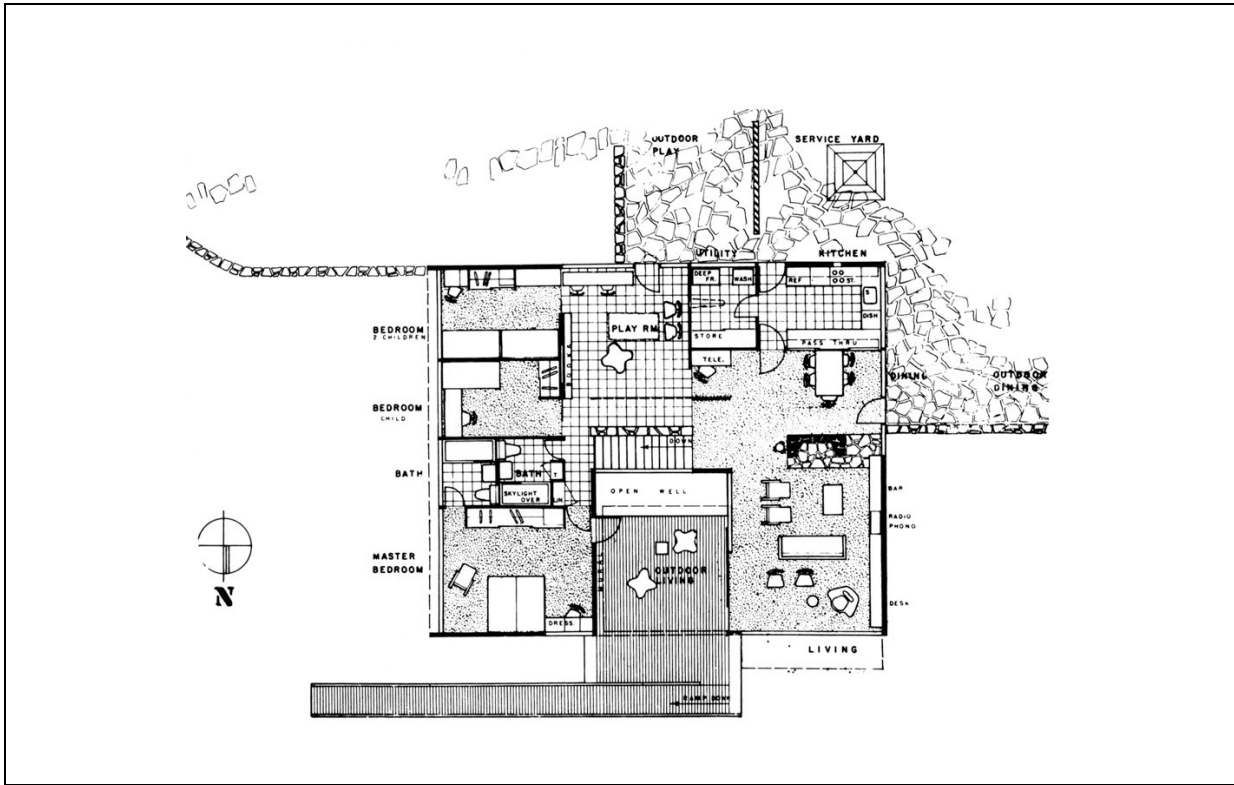


Figure 8-12. Harry Seidler. The floor plan of the Rose Seidler House, Turramurra, 1949. Harry Seidler, *Houses, Interiors, Projects*, 1954, p.3.

In Seidler’s essay, the language of painting was employed for his description of the “New Architecture”, “[In planning], this visual transformation in three dimensions can be illustrated by the conventional solid cube and its present-day dissolution. By exploding the cube and relating its surfaces in oppositional directions, spatial relationships result. This free-flowing space, interpenetrating and channelled to form such tensional relationships is the essence of our new architecture. It is not insignificant that this visual tendency in architecture is recalled in the rational need for open planning and flexibility.”

The analogies to painting continue. “It has been said that pure colour is an invention of modern art. Never before was colour used with such daring as in painting today. Applying this to architecture directly, would, of course, be disastrous. People leading complicated lives cannot possibly exist in a highly colourful atmosphere. However, the place for pure colour is in the form of carefully placed accents in large spaces of neutral quiet tones. The actual amount of pigment present may be the same as in the conventional all-over pastel shade

⁶⁶⁴ Sigfried Giedion. “Space-Time in Art Architecture and Construction.” in *Space, Time and Architecture*, Harvard University Press, 1941(1946 edition), p.430.

composition. It is just that we concentrate colour and let it “swim” in a neutral medium, Again, oppositional tension in colour will result.”

Seidler’s essay made an explicit attack on the emerging “regional” tendencies in Australian modernism. Seidler’s knowledge of Australian work would have been modest at the time of this essay and it can be assumed that he assessed the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and his followers under the title of “organic architecture”. The name of Wright, of course, is never mentioned, but it is clear from the shift in the essay’s tone that Seidler finds regional themes in materials, siting and non-standardised elements in architectural composition to be troubling.



Figure 8-13. Harry Seidler. “A simple low cost house”, Newport, 1954. Harry Seidler, *Houses, Interiors, Projects*, 1954, p.25.

“In architecture to-day this [organic architecture] controversy, has reached a considerably crystalline form. Let us start from a common basis for both [the “New Architecture” and “Organic Architecture”]. All of us agree that architecture is a living thing and must change continually with our technological development pattern. Again, both will agree that any new technological development should be readily absorbed in architecture and contribute to its betterment.”

“However, the opinions diverge on aesthetics. Organic architecture is concerned to a large extent with Nature as the source of the aesthetic formulation of building. Nature is considered the most perfect of creations, and architecture must blend, must become part of it. Buildings of this kind are usually difficult to distinguish from their surroundings. Where does Nature stop and architecture begin, and vice-versa? Does not such architecture seem rather weak, subservient and not very proud of itself?”

“Followers of this romantic philosophy will go to any extreme to use natural materials such as wood and stone, preferably grown on or dug out of the building site. Why should limit ourselves in such a way, particularly when we consider the immense possibilities of our machine age, of synthetic materials, their assembly and fast transportation. Let us ask ourselves whether this approach allows for any change, something which we all agree to be desirable. Nature does not change essentially. Would the source of aesthetic inspiration not become exhausted [?].”

Seidler’s contempt for a regional response to domestic architecture was intense. Don Gazzard (later a principal in Clarke Gazzard Yeomans) recalled in his 2006 memoir *Sydneysider* that as a second year engineering student, he worked with Seidler in his basement office at Point Piper in 1948-49. “My offer [to work] fitted Seidler’s ideology too. I had some understanding of building construction, could calculate simple structures [...] but much more important in his eyes, I had not been corrupted by the local architectural schools.”⁶⁶⁵

CONCLUSION

There are consistent themes amongst the essays from Ancher, Moore, Bunning, Seidler and Baldwinson. All of the Sydney modernists captured in varying degrees what Philip Goad has described in an essay on Best Overend as the “modern” way of thinking. Le Corbusier and Gropius, the titans of modernism had shown that modernism was a position “...that had to be professed as well as built.”⁶⁶⁶

Unity is not surprising amongst this group of architects. As Leonie Sandercock says in her study of urban planning in Australia, “What is remarkable about the literature of post-war reconstruction is the unity of themes and recommendations shared alike by Labor politicians, academics and popular writers. All were concerned with the need for a [centralised] planned economy, [...] city planning, regional and participatory planning, [...] and planning to ensure adequate housing for everyone [...].”⁶⁶⁷

It is no surprise to find that these modernists condemned historicism in all of its variants, by the mid-20th century, this condemnation was axiomatic. None are attracted to the architectural styles associated with the 1925 *Exposition des Arts Décoratifs* in Paris. Baldwinson, Ancher and Moore thundered against it; Ancher to the point of condemning his earliest work in the Prevost House.

⁶⁶⁵ Don Gazzard. *Sydneysider*. Watermark Press, 2006, p.27.

⁶⁶⁶ Philip Goad. “Best Overend. Pioneer Modernist in Melbourne.” *Fabrications*. 6:June 1995, p.120.

⁶⁶⁷ Leonie Sandercock. *Cities for Sale. Property, Politics and Urban Planning in Australia*. Melbourne University Press, 1977, p.99.

All of the modernist writers in this group supported the use of standardized building elements and the principles of prefabrication, Walter Bunning, drawing on his work for the Commonwealth Housing Commission was most enthusiastic about Australian and international prefabrication programmes. The use of the reinforced concrete, steel structure and glass in building is embraced with enthusiasm but only Bunning raised the importance of improved assembly techniques.

These modernists admired the methodical, rational approach of a scientific method for planning, design and engineering construction, although each practitioner saw it employed in distinctly different methods. For Ancher, science is central: In 1939 he wrote, "It might be asked why the necessity for a new aesthetic which implies a new philosophy, should arise from the needs of the day? The answer is that it arises from a fundamental historical process, the application of science to life." Ancher, Bunning and Seidler saw scientific rigour in the development of materials, engineering and construction techniques for contemporary building. Bunning, however, had a much stronger brief for the integration of science in the development of prefabrication methods and materials. Baldwinson acknowledged and welcomed the contribution of science and engineering in the New Architecture, particularly in the design development of functional interior planning.

Despite the harmony that modernist architects displayed regarding aspects of the New Architecture, Baldwinson, Moore and to a lesser extent, Bunning (the latter favouring regional materials) parted company with the "extra-territorial" or international views of Ancher and Seidler. Baldwinson and the others advocated the adaptation of architecture to regional concerns. This was a post-war position of long standing in Victorian architecture as Doug Evans and others have shown, notably amongst the work of Roy Grounds, Frederick Romberg, Fritz Janeba and Robin Boyd.⁶⁶⁸

Regionalism is an issue that the New England-trained Seidler particularly opposed, attacking the idea with a notable sarcasm worth recalling, "Buildings of this kind are usually difficult to distinguish from their surroundings. Where does Nature stop and architecture begin, and vice-versa? Does not such architecture seem rather weak, subservient and not very proud of itself?"

Writing five years before Seidler's essay appeared, Moore was concerned over what he considers the uncritical adaptation of the "international style" for an Australian setting, finding fault in the enthusiasm for flat roofs and generous glazing for residential architecture. Although he supported the use of the materials of modernism such as concrete, steel and glass, he considered that Australian architects should support the development of a "national architecture" that responded to the local climate and site with adjustments to roof forms, internal planning and glazing.

⁶⁶⁸ Contributors to this debate are surveyed by Doug Evans in "Centre and Periphery. Melbourne Regionalism and its Global Context in the 1950s and 1960s." International conference on the research of modern architecture, 30 August - 1 September 2002. (www.alvaraalto.fi/conferences/universal/finalpapers/doug.evans.rtf). 11 October 2007.

Although Baldwinson did not isolate the development of a “national architecture” as a singular issue, he observed that the adaptation of the building to the site was a critical element of his practice. In a 1947 address, he said clearly, “Adapt building to its site, climate and environment. It is often impossible to repeat a design successfully on a different site [...]” This philosophy was integrated in his architectural practice where building forms and plans were consistently developed for a particular site.

Significantly, Baldwinson’s views diverged from the mainstream modernists in his insistence on an expressive architectural language where he evoked such terms as “emotion”, “fantasy” and “drama”. While Ancher and Seidler praised the role of science, Baldwinson spoke of “passion”. In evoking emotion, Baldwinson revealed his attraction to an architectural romanticism; he closed his 1947 talk to the Contemporary Art Society by saying, “Design with scientific reasoning but at the same time [...] temper the new forms with fantasy.” This expression of fantasy, from an architect not known for hyperbole, must be taken at face value.

While Baldwinson adopted the rather severe tenets of modernist architecture in his public addresses, he reserved the right to employ fantasy under his own terms. The standard dictionary definition of “Fantasy” is commonly given as “imagination unrestricted by reality” and Baldwinson’s pursuit of this elusive imaginative quality included his use of massive sandstone chimneys (with stone usually gathered locally) and stone blade walls as well as adventuresome siting. As the following chapter will illustrate, he suspended his houses above abrupt escarpments with pier-supported slabs and carefully positioned his structures around existing trees and sandstone projections. His houses turn away from the streetscape to provided extensive views framed through timber-framed sliding glass doors or glazed window walls. These bushland, harbour or ocean views, concealed by the street elevations, often provided the visitor with an element of surprise equivalent to a landscape Ha-Ha. These views and vistas provided a theatrical experience akin to fantasy.

Like a proscenium stage, Baldwinson’s decks, window walls and verandahs provided the occupant with a direct visual access to a theatre of nature. His post-war work often employed a low bench-like railing (and at times, no barrier) that offers little or no physical protection for the occupant. This precariousness carried its own drama.

These architectural devices and the manipulation of axial views through the plan brought nature to the doorstep of many of Baldwinson’s mid-20th century houses. When writing of his designs for the Dobell House project of 1947, he wrote, “It was felt that the beauty of the wild, rocky timbered environment [of the Dobell site] should be preserved, or rather, played up to. The building, terracing, and planting should harmonise with the natural terrain, both in colour and texture. To this end the abundant stone on the site was chosen as the principal building material. Design emphasis, if any, is toward easy romanticism [author’s emphasis] rather than formalism [...]”⁶⁶⁹ While Baldwinson shares the doctrines of science, rational planning and the use of concrete and glass materials of the pioneering modernists practicing in Sydney, he reserved the right to explore the romantic impulses of his architectural practice.

⁶⁶⁹ “Proposed Studio for Mr William Dobell.” *Architecture*. 35: June 1947, p.20. Also cited in D.L. Johnson. *Australian Architecture 1901-51. Sources of Modernism*, 1980, p.167.